

which drew together a wide variety of leading business, labour and other representatives to encourage more effective harmonization of economic decision-making.

9.2.13 Medical Research Council

The Medical Research Council (MRC) is the main channel through which the federal government provides financial support for research in the health sciences initiated and carried out in Canadian schools of medicine, pharmacy and dentistry. It had existed in various administrative forms within the framework of the National Research Council since 1938 but in 1969, with the passage of the Government Organization Act, it became a departmental Crown corporation in its own right. It reports to Parliament through the Minister of National Health and Welfare but is completely separate from the Department. The Council itself is made up of a full-time president appointed by the Governor in Council, a vice-president and 20 members, drawn chiefly from the universities, who serve without remuneration for terms of up to three years. The program is administered by a small full-time secretariat of scientific and administrative personnel.

Under the terms of its legislation, the MRC has authority "to promote, assist and undertake research in the health sciences, with the exception of public health research". The latter, by statute, is the responsibility of the federal Department of National Health and Welfare. Its program is divided into three main sectors: grants, awards, and research development. Expenditures of the Medical Research Council for 1974-75 totalled \$43.7 million, of which \$840,000 was spent on administration of its programs.

The Grants Program is by far the largest component of the MRC operation, accounting for \$27.3 million in 1974-75. Applications from investigators on the staff of Canadian universities and affiliated institutions are considered on three occasions each year. The basis for this consideration is peer assessment; each application is reviewed by external referees expert in the field involved and then considered by one of 17 grants committees, each composed of eight to 10 senior investigators drawn from universities, government and industry. The recommendations of these committees are then forwarded to the Council and awards are approved to the extent that funds permit. Most are made annually but, where a research program of high merit has reached a stable level of expenditure, support in a specified annual amount may be provided for terms of three to five years. The grants are designed to provide for the normal operating costs of approved programs and for items of special research equipment; they may not be used for the remuneration of the investigator to whom the award is made.

The Awards Program provides support for research personnel in several categories. There are opportunities for research training of graduates of high calibre at the postdoctoral level through Fellowship and Centennial Fellowship programs and at the predoctoral level through a program of Studentships. These awards are all prize awards and the number of successful candidates is therefore limited. Many other research trainees, however, receive support through the operating grants to investigators who supervise their training. The MRC Associateship program provides continuing salary support for a limited number of highly qualified independent researchers working in universities and devoting at least 75% of their time to research and graduate teaching. The MRC Scholarship provides young investigators who have completed their formal research training with an opportunity to demonstrate in a university setting their potential for independent research without the necessity of, at the same time, carrying a heavy undergraduate teaching load; these awards are tenable for up to five years. Provision is also made for the exchange of information among Canadian scientists through the Visiting Professorship Program, and among Canadian scientists and their foreign colleagues by means of the Visiting Scientist Program under which Canadian investigators may spend up to one research year abroad or foreign scientists may spend periods of three to 12 months working in Canadian laboratories.

A significant portion of the MRC's developmental funds is used to assist in the correction of disparity, both regional and disciplinary, in Canada's research effort; universities attempting to build up programs in underdeveloped fields are encouraged to apply for Development Grants in a special program designed to assist the deans of health science faculties in the recruitment of new staff by giving assurance of research funds and equipment, and, if necessary, of salary support for limited periods. A special Group Program has been developed