

# Budget will mean brain drain: researcher

BY JEANETTE STEWART, SPECIAL TO THE STARPHOENIX FEBRUARY 3, 2009

At least one Saskatoon scientist is concerned Canada's environmental researchers will find a better climate further south after the release of the federal budget.

The Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences (CFCAS) did not receive new funding from the federal government, which will result in the shelving of two ongoing projects at the University of Saskatchewan.

"Without it, there is very little going on," said John Pomeroy, a Canada Research Chair at the U of S and lead researcher for two networks funded by the CFCAS.

The two projects CFCAS funds at the U of S are the IP3 and DRI networks. The IP3 network monitors mountain snow and glaciers, Arctic permafrost and freshwater levels. The DRI network is dedicated to tracking and investigating the cause and impact of prairie drought.

"In the middle of the Prairies, we've got to be looking at climate and drought and water supply," Pomeroy said. "We're not worried about whether climate change is occurring or not. We see evidence of it all the time. What we want to work on is reducing the impact of it."

The non-profit CFCAS was created in 2000, at arm's length from the federal government. The organization became the main source of funding for university-based research into climate, atmospheric and oceanic sciences. The last federal funding it received was allocated in 2003 and will fund the organization until 2011, but will not provide for new research projects.

"If we don't get more funds, we will have to close our doors in two years," said Dawn Conway, CFCAS executive director.

Since its inception, the agency has directed \$115 million towards climate and weather research.

Representatives from the foundation met with Environment Minister Jim Prentice in November, but results of the talk did not make their way into the budget.

"He told us that the economy was the government's current priority," said Conway. "It's innovation that we need for the future to pull us out of our economic slump."

A representative from the office of the environment minister said the organization must make do with the funds it has.

"Usually when funding is announced for a fixed period, you fund it for that period and then a decision is made by the government closer to the end of that funding," said Bill Rogers, director of communications for the office of the environment minister. "They're being funded until 2011, 2012."

Both Conway and Pomeroy say they are concerned for the future of the researchers the program has already trained if there is no money available for new research projects.

"For the professors, we carry on with our jobs," Pomeroy said.

"For our graduate students that we've trained, they'll be out of work. . . . We could have a big brain drain of researchers in climate and water science to the United States."

Genome Canada is another federally supported organization receiving no new funds from the budget.

Regional operations are secure until 2013, but the organization must look elsewhere for new money, said Carol Reynolds, director of corporate development and communications at Genome Prairie. The regional office helps fund and facilitate research projects at universities in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

"To stay competitive, we need to continually feed our research funds," she said. "I think it will affect competitiveness for Canada in genomics research. Places like China and India and even the U.S. are putting more dollars into research."