



Appendix 2

Statement on Ethics for NSERC Selection Committees and Panels

NSERC must meet the highest ethical standards in all that it does in order to continue to merit the trust and confidence of the research community, the government, and the public at large. The members of NSERC selection committees and panels must meet very high standards of ethical behaviour in their task, and must be seen to do so in order to honour and enhance public confidence in the Council's ability to act in the public interest and for the long-term public good. Where a conflict arises between private and public interests, members will be expected to take whatever measures are necessary to ensure that public interests are protected.

The members of NSERC selection committees and panels are appointed as individuals; they are not the advocates or representatives of their disciplines nor are they the delegates of any organization. Their duty is to make the best possible objective decisions on the investment of a fixed sum of scarce public funds in basic research, based on the merits of the cases made to them.

Conflict of Interest

Because of the technical content of the issues they must address, the selection committees and panels must have members who have current knowledge of the issues in research. However, the activities which maintain that current knowledge could put individual members in situations of real, potential or apparent conflict between their private interests and their public duties as committee or panel members. If that should happen, there shall be full and open disclosure and the committee or panel as a whole shall take whatever measures are required to ensure ethical behaviour and to preserve the appearance of ethical behaviour.

NSERC recognizes that the potential for conflict of interest will always exist when expertise and current knowledge are required to judge among competing proposals in research. To attempt to devise rules that would eliminate all potential for conflict of interest would be to risk reducing vision and expert judgement to a bureaucratic exercise.

The challenge is to recognize that conflict is always possible, and to be ready to manage it so that the ultimate outcome is in the public interest.

Disclosure and Compliance Measures

NSERC recognizes that the first guardian of ethical behaviour in such circumstances is the individual committee member involved. The second guardian is the committee as a whole. Rules of disclosure and procedure can assist members to meet their obligations,



but only if they choose to invoke them and to follow them both to the letter and in the spirit in which they were formulated. Members must openly disclose any real, potential, or apparent conflict of interest. The committee will then discuss with the Chair what measures, if any, are required to ensure that the public interest is protected. The Chair may seek guidance from NSERC staff before coming to a conclusion.

Disclosures and compliance measures will be documented and retained for the record. However, given their particularly sensitive mission, the selection committees and panels might consider these rules as only minimally adequate for their purposes, and may choose to add to them.

Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure

Documentation provided by NSERC to members of the selection committees may contain personal information and confidential technical information. It is subject therefore to the *Access to Information Act*, the *Privacy Act*, the Tri-Council Policy Statement: *Integrity in Research and Scholarship* and other federal information policies and regulations. (Information on these policies and regulations is available upon request.) Documentation must be treated as strictly confidential. Committee deliberations are confidential. Peer review documentation provided to committee members must be used by the appointed committee members only for the purpose for which it was originally collected. It must not be used for any other purpose or discussed with or disclosed to non-committee members.

NSERC recognizes, of course, that the ultimate guarantee of the integrity of the peer review process is the integrity of the individuals appointed as members of the selection committees and panels. Upon appointment, all members are required to indicate in writing that they understand and accept NSERC's requirements concerning conflicts of interest, confidentiality and non-disclosure (Form 251).