

On July 6, 2011, the US House Appropriations Committee released the Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill for the fiscal year 2012. The bill calls for a significant (\$1.6 billion below last year's level) reduction in NASA funding. As part of this, the bill calls for a termination of all funding to the NASA-led James Webb Space Telescope (JWST). The JWST is regarded as a much more capable successor to the highly successful but aging Hubble Space Telescope.

The Canadian Astronomical Society (CASCA) is deeply concerned by the US House Appropriations Committee bill. CASCA sees the JWST as an essential part of the future of astronomy research in Canada and as vital to maintaining Canada's place as one of the world leaders in the field. JWST was identified as the top space astronomy priority in the 1998 Long Range Plan for Canadian Astronomy, and its importance was reaffirmed in the 2010 Canadian Long Range Plan. The JWST is well on its way to completion, and its cancellation at this stage would be highly damaging to Canadian, US and international science.

JWST is an international collaboration between NASA, the European Space Agency, and the Canadian Space Agency (CSA). Very significant effort has already been expended on the project by all partners, with much of the development and construction work already completed. Over the past decade, Canada's government, industry, scientists and engineers have invested significant amounts of funds and effort towards the design and construction of Canadian JWST components, which are scheduled to be finished and delivered in the Spring of 2012. JWST represents the largest commitment to an astronomy mission in CSA's history. Should JWST be cancelled, major investments of all kinds will be completely lost for all partners. Scientific activities across all disciplines would also be dealt a severe blow affecting the morale of all scientists and the impetus for new projects.

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