



University of
Lethbridge

NEWS RELEASE

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University of Lethbridge’s Dr. Athan Zovoilis has Canada Research Chair renewed for five-year term

Dr. Athan Zovoilis, professor in the University of Lethbridge’s Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry, will continue his cutting-edge research with the renewal of his Tier 2 Canada Research Chair funding.

Zovoilis, a Canada Research Chair in RNA Bioinformatics and Genomics, will receive \$500,000 over five years, part of Thursday’s [Government of Canada announcement](#) of more than \$102 million in support of 119 new and renewed Canada Research Chairs at 35 Canadian research institutions.



“Our government recognizes that investing in researchers and scientists results in breakthroughs to advance our society and benefits all Canadians,” says François-Phillipe Champagne, minister of innovation, science and industry. “The Canada Research Chairs Program provides a unique opportunity for researchers to push boundaries and make cutting-edge discoveries with lasting impacts across the health, environment, natural sciences, social sciences and humanities disciplines.”

The Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), a CRCP partner, also commits to supporting nine of the chairs, at eight institutions, with an investment of close to \$1.8 million through its John R. Evans Leaders Fund.

The renewal of his CRC funding will allow Zovoilis, director of the Southern Alberta Genome Sciences Centre (SAGSC) and a member of the Canadian Centre for Behavioural Neuroscience (CCBN) and the Alberta RNA Research and Training Institute (ARRTI), to

continue his work on elucidating the role of a class of biomolecules called non-coding RNAs in health and disease. Often described as the “dark matter” of our genome, these RNAs are connected with human and animal health and disease. Supported by this funding, the Zovoilis lab will work on developing new next generation sequencing and bioinformatics approaches to study the transcriptome and epi-transcriptome of non-coding RNAs in various biological contexts such as aging associated diseases, Alzheimer’s disease, cellular response to stress, neurotoxicity and human and animal infections.

“This funding will advance further our capacity on genome sciences and bioinformatics built within SAGSC, CCBN and ARRTI,” says Zovoilis. “RNA is becoming increasingly an important player in aging research, neurodegenerative diseases and agriculture research, and developing the genomics tools to study it will enable the generation of novel diagnostic and therapeutic approaches.”

The University of Lethbridge is home to [13 Canada Research Chairs](#), in fields ranging from RNA genomics and hydrodynamics to child and youth studies, Indigenous arts, experimental astrophysics and more.

“The depth and breadth of our research chairs is reflective of the excellence of the faculty members throughout the University,” says Dr. Dena McMartin, vice-president (research). “Whatever faculty or school our students choose to study and do research in, it’s likely they will have the opportunity to learn and work with some of the best researchers in their respective fields. Dr. Zovoilis’ research and team, in particular, are leading Canadian innovation in RNA bioinformatics which expands scientific knowledge while also benefiting agri-food, health, and environmental development and sustainability.”

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/dr-athan-zovoilis-has-canada-research-chair-renewed-five-year-term>

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