



News Release

For Immediate Release

Government of Canada Supports Innovation in Life Sciences Sector

July 8, 2015 – Lethbridge, Alberta – Western Economic Diversification Canada

Today, the Honourable Michelle Rempel, Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification, announced an investment for the University of Lethbridge in support of the establishment of the first synthetic biology maker space (Synbridge) in Alberta. The Synbridge maker space initiative will enhance research capabilities, boost services available for industry partners, increase training capacity for Highly Qualified Personnel, and enable students to explore commercial applications of their research ideas.

Federal funding of \$1.1 million, through the Western Diversification Program (WDP), will go towards the purchase of state of the art equipment to support the on campus maker space. This space will enable students at the University to move their research ideas to the proof of principle stage, while also providing western Canadian businesses in the life sciences sectors with enhanced access to the services and expertise they need to commercialize their technologies.

This project builds on the strength of the University of Lethbridge in synthetic biology – a science that applies engineering principles to biological systems and that explores the design and development of new biological devices and systems. The potential of this emerging science has been widely recognized to create transformational enhancements in areas such as healthcare, agriculture, bio-fuels/energy, manufacturing, clean water and bio-remediation.

Quick Facts

- Synthetic biology is the application of engineering principles to the fundamental components of biology.
- The synthetic biology sector is expected to grow to become a \$16 billion industry by 2018.
- The Government of Canada's support will assist in the purchase of:
 - A Cell Sorter, which will decrease the amount of time required to isolate and sort different cell types according to their designed properties (design-build-test cycle);
 - A protein and nucleic acid purification infrastructure used in the assembly of biological devices; and,
 - A PCR cyler, which allows for the amplification of DNA and the assembly of DNA based devices.

Quotes

"Our Government recognizes the important role that innovation plays in creating jobs and economic growth. By investing in specialized equipment that will allow research findings to move more rapidly from lab to market, we are increasing Western Canada's competitive advantage and helping to grow Canadian companies."

- *The Honourable Michelle Rempel, Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification*

"Our Government is committed to creating opportunities and fostering innovation. By supporting this project, we are further establishing southern Alberta's position as a world-class research and innovation hub."

- *Jim Hillyer, Member of Parliament for Lethbridge*

"Through the mentorship and leadership provided by our outstanding faculty, our students have shown they are among the best in the world, as evidenced by their excellent performances at international global synthetic biology competitions. This investment will be transformational for our

students, and for the broader southern Alberta community. This new equipment will help students bring to life their ideas and provide opportunities to commercialize their initiatives.”

- *Dr. Andrew Hakin, Provost and Vice-President (Academic), University of Lethbridge*

Additional Links

- [University of Lethbridge](#)

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