
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Small Business, Technology and Economic
Development

PROVINCE PUTS \$3.5M INTO GREENER CROPS AND GARDENS

LANGLEY – State-of-the-art labs for research into ways to reduce pesticide use will open Friday at Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

The research will explore beneficial insects, fungi and viruses to control pests in greenhouses, gardens and farmers' fields. The labs and research are supported by the B.C. Knowledge Development Fund and a new Leading Edge Endowment Fund chair in sustainable horticulture.

“We’re building B.C.’s reputation for leadership in environmental protection and the green economy by investing in first-rate researchers and top-notch labs for them to work in,” said Iain Black, Minister of Small Business, Technology and Economic Development. “By funding a LEEF chair in sustainable horticulture, and the Institute for Sustainable Horticulture’s new facilities, we’re supporting innovations that will give our growers a green edge.”

The appointment of Deborah Henderson, director of the Institute for Sustainable Horticulture, as LEEF chair was also announced today. Henderson has a B.Sc. in biology from Trent University, an M.Sc. in parasitology from the University of Manitoba, and a PhD in entomology from the University of B.C. She has worked closely with private companies, growers associations and government agencies on integrated pest management for several years and will build on this hands-on experience.

“We will develop new biocontrol products from our native strains of viruses and fungi which will target pests in our major crops and landscapes,” Henderson said. “Food production is changing, and the mass importation of cheap produce from far-away places may not survive global warming and the increasing cost of transportation. To have the security of healthy food and a healthy environment, we need to support our local growers and food systems with the products and markets they need to stay vibrant and viable.”

Government’s \$1.25-million endowment for the LEEF regional innovation chair was matched by the Kwantlen Polytechnic University Foundation with funds from private donors.

The Province also invested \$2.2 million in the Institute for Sustainable Horticulture’s new facilities – 450 square metres of research labs on the Langley campus, and a 700-square-metre research greenhouse to study the potential for geothermal heat as a clean energy source.

“Kwantlen has long served the agricultural community of southern British Columbia through its School of Horticulture,” says David Atkinson, Kwantlen Polytechnic University president. “With the addition of the Institute for Sustainable Horticulture, Kwantlen now has further opportunity to work with local industry on the critical issues of sustainability, urban agriculture and agri-food security.”

The \$7.1-million research facility, Kwantlen’s first, will have climate-controlled rooms for rearing insects, specialized rooms for production of beneficial fungi and viruses, a molecular diagnostic lab, and two research labs for study of the insects and microbial biocontrols. The adjacent greenhouse, as well as being used to test alternate energy options such as geothermal heating and cooling systems, will provide 500 square metres of growing space to study production systems for new indoor crops.

“Langley has established itself as a leader in agriculture education and environmental awareness,” says Langley MLA Mary Polak, Minister of Children and Family Development. “This new facility will allow our students to further understand the changing world and how to harness energy potential.”

“This investment further cements Kwantlen Polytechnic University’s Langley campus as a destination for a top-notch education,” adds Fort Langley-Aldergrove MLA Rich Coleman, Minister of Housing and Social Development. “The knowledge our students learn here will go towards finding new, innovative opportunities for our province’s economic success.”

Funding for the labs and greenhouse came from the B.C. Knowledge Development Fund, which has provided almost \$357 million for research infrastructure at the province’s public post-secondary institutions, research agencies and hospitals since 2001.

The Province’s \$56.25-million Leading Edge Endowment Fund was created to attract and retain top researchers in B.C., and to spur new research and new knowledge with long-term technological economic and social benefits. To date, 13 research leadership chairs have been named; today’s announcement is the sixth regional innovation chair. Regional innovation chairs have three main goals:

- To support applied research, development and innovation that will bolster regional economic and social development in all areas of the province.
- To attract highly qualified people in areas relevant to regional social and economic development.
- To support collaboration between post-secondary institutions and their regional communities.

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