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## Laurier enters \$2-million environmental science research partnership with NWT

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University is entering a \$2-million partnership agreement with the Government of the Northwest Territories to support environmental science research that will provide important data for effective freshwater-resource management and the sustainability of northern ecosystems.

The agreement will be signed at a special event in the Science Courtyard on Laurier's Waterloo campus Wednesday May 26, starting at 10 a.m. The Honourable J. Michael Miltenberger, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, will sign the agreement on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories; Laurier President Dr. Max Blouw will sign on behalf of the university. A tour of Laurier hydrology, biology and chemistry labs will follow the signing event.

Under the agreement, the Government of the Northwest Territories will provide \$2 million over five years (2010-15) to support the Canadian Aquatic Laboratory for Interdisciplinary Boreal Ecosystem Research (CALIBER) program, which is based at Laurier and involves researchers from the Laurier Institute for Water Science and Laurier's Cold Regions Research Centre.

The CALIBER program has also received funding from the Canada Foundation for Innovation, Wilfrid Laurier University, and donations from the private sector.

"This agreement is a reflection of Wilfrid Laurier University's significant research expertise in water resources and northern environments," Blouw said. "We are delighted to partner with the Government of the Northwest Territories to engage in the science needed to make effective policy decisions involving water-resource management and the sustainability of northern ecosystems."

The agreement will expand CALIBER's research activities and enable it to build on its past and current research in the NWT. It also enables the Government of the Northwest Territories to participate as a member of the program's science committee as it sets research agendas and associated studies for the NWT, and to develop mentor and training opportunities for NWT residents. The partnership includes scientific and technical training and mentorship components, professional development for government, industry and other organizations, and outreach to promote interest in water science and the boreal ecosystem in schools and communities.

"This partnership will support and enhance the work being done through the NWT Water Stewardship Strategy and provide some of the vital information needed to protect our water resources and address critical issues such as the current and future impacts of rapid development and climate change," Miltenberger said. "This partnership will also help us train the next generation of water scientists and managers."

BACKGROUND  
**LAURIER**  
*Wilfrid Laurier University*

## **CALIBER program and Laurier-GNWT environmental science research partnership**

The Canadian Aquatic Laboratories for Interdisciplinary Boreal Ecosystem Research (CALIBER) is based at Wilfrid Laurier University, with key research conducted in the Northwest Territories in partnership with the Government of the Northwest Territories. CALIBER involves researchers from the Laurier Institute for Water Science and Laurier's Cold Regions Research Centre.

- The Government of the Northwest Territories' contribution to the research partnership is \$2 million over five years (2010-2015). Another \$2 million for infrastructure for the project, and \$1.3 million for operating and maintenance funds, is being provided by the Canada Foundation for Innovation, an independent corporation created by the Government of Canada to fund research infrastructure. Other funding is provided by Wilfrid Laurier University and private donations.
- Boreal aquatic ecosystems make up Canada's largest freshwater reserve. The CALIBER partnership is designed to develop leading-edge scientific studies to ensure the sustainability of northern ecosystems.
- CALIBER applies a holistic, interdisciplinary and ecosystem approach based on watersheds, and responds to the urgent and serious concerns on the availability (flows and storage processes) of, and the associate effects of nutrients and contaminants on, boreal freshwater.
- Current CALIBER projects in the NWT include:
  - Slave River Delta (mouth of Slave River, near Fort Resolution).
  - Scotty Creek (near Fort Simpson).
  - Daring Lake (upper Coppermine River system).
- Past CALIBER projects in the NWT include:
  - Trail Valley Creek (near Inuvik).
  - Havipak Creek (near Inuvik).
  - Axel Heiberg Island (when it was part of the NWT).
  - Ellesmere Island (when it was part of the NWT).
- Laurier will provide eminent scientists to advance NWT research on water stewardship including research on basin-scale drainage and energy flow processes in the boreal environment and developing laboratory and field methodologies to improve assessments of contaminant effects.
- The research partnership supports the following keys to success in the NWT Water Stewardship Strategy:
  - Advance the physically-based understanding of water and energy cycling as it affects the volume and timing of run-off within and from boreal regions.
  - Improve the understanding of special causal linkages between landscape disturbances and resulting changes in hydrological and geochemical characteristics of northern aquatic systems.
  - Generate knowledge clarify specific links between natural resource development and climate variability on the sustainability of boreal ecosystems.
  - Develop and test comprehensive models that integrate the results of previous research into prediction tools for boreal ecosystems.
  - Create a community of scientists and uses that can become partners in discovery and development.
- The GNWT's contribution will help Laurier acquire the necessary research infrastructure for the CALIBER program, including field, lab and personnel support, and will help the partners in acquiring future funding