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Laurier researchers part of \$5 million Changing Cold Regions Network

WATERLOO – Laurier researchers Bill Quinton and Jennifer Baltzer are among participants in the \$5 million Changing Cold Regions Network recently announced by the Honourable Gary Goodyear, Minister of State (Science and Technology) and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC). The Changing Cold Regions Network (CCRN) will study the relationships between changing climate, ecosystems, and water in the permafrost regions of the Subarctic, the Boreal Forest, the Western Cordillera, and the Prairies.

“We are thrilled to be part of this important partnership,” said Abby Goodrum, vice-president: research. “Laurier’s expertise in cold regions research will play an important part in this initiative to add to evidence-based research about climate change.”

The cold interior of Western Canada east of the Continental Divide has one of the world’s most extreme and variable climates and is experiencing rapid environmental change. In a region that holds a variety of globally important natural resources and sustains 80 per cent of Canada’s agricultural production, changing climate is affecting the land, its vegetation and its water.

The CCRN is led by Howard Wheeler at the University of Saskatchewan. Organized around five research themes, the network will focus on fourteen sites located across Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, the North West Territories, and the Yukon. More than 50 university and government scientists and international collaborators, together with graduate students and post-doctoral fellows, will be involved in the project.

Bill Quinton, Canada Research Chair in Cold Regions Hydrology and associate professor in Laurier’s Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, will lead two of the research theme areas. Quinton’s research will focus on improving our understanding of and ability to predict how unprecedented climate warming and industrial expansion is affecting regional hydrological systems in northwestern Canada. Much of this will link closely to Baltzer’s research because of the close coupling of hydrological and ecological systems. This will also complement ongoing research in the Laurier-Government of the Northwest Territories [Partnership Agreement](#).

Jennifer Baltzer, Canada Research Chair in Forests and Global Change and associate professor in Laurier’s Biology department, will be involved in studies within the same theme areas. Her research will focus on quantifying responses of vegetation across the region to current conditions and recent changes using CCRN observatory information coupled with data from a widespread network of permanent sampling areas. Key observatories will be used to manipulate conditions and measure the ecosystem responses to these changes.

The CCRN will combine existing and new experimental data with modeling and remote sensing to better understand, diagnose and predict changes to land, water and climate.

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NSERC awarded Climate Change and Atmospheric Research (CCAR) grants to seven research teams in this competition, valued at more than \$32 million. Established in 2011, CCAR is administered by NSERC and supports climate change and atmospheric research at Canadian post-secondary institutions. Research projects funded through CCAR involve interpreting earth system processes; advancing weather, climate and environmental prediction; and understanding recent changes in the Arctic and cold region environments.

NSERC announcement: For the NSERC news release, please click [here](#).

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