NEWS RELEASE

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Laurier researcher awarded $550,000 to support responsible development in northern regions

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University Professor **James McGeer** and his research team, including Associate Professor **Scott Smith**, have been awarded **$550,000** from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) **Strategic Partnership Grants** program to study the impact of metal mining on Canada's environmentally sensitive north.

In partnership with industry and government, the research team will develop new science-based tools for the environmental risk assessement of mining activity.

Canada is a global leader in mining innovation and this also extends to developing the science necessary for environmental sustainability in the sector. Central to this commitment is the need for strong regulatory approaches supported by leading-edge research. Currently there are significant gaps in assessing environmental risks associated with metal mining. Working across Northern Ontario and the Northwest Territories (NWT), the research team will determine the toxicity of metals and the influence of local water chemistry on the responses of the unique biota to metals in these environments.

"In order to make policy to protect these fragile environments, we need to know how the local environment will be impacted," said **James McGeer**, an ecotoxicologist and director of the Laurier Institute for Water Science. "This work will give environmental risk assessors information and data to facilitate an improved understanding of the potential risks associated with mining and other resource extraction developments."

The new scientific understanding and novel approaches developed through this Strategic Partnership Grant will significantly reduce the uncertainty associated with risk assessment of metals in the environment. The reliable determinations of environmental risk will prevent unnecessary economic costs to Canada's natural resources sector and allow regulatory agencies to target resources more effectively.

"Canada is a mining nation and understanding how development may impact northern environments is central to our future prosperity," said **Robert Gordon**, vice-president: research. "As well our training of students involved in this essential work will contribute to skills development and contributions to the protection of Canadian environments over the long-term."

The project is a collaboration between Wilfrid Laurier Univeristy, Université de Montréal, the Institut national de la recherche scientifique, Natural Resources Canada, Centre d'expertise en analyse environnementale du Québec, Environment Canada, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, the International Zinc Association and Avalon Rare Metals Inc. The project will make use of Laurier's world-class Centre for Cold Regions and Water Science and permanent field sites in the NWT, established through the Government of the Northwest Territories-Laurier Partnership.

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About the NSERC Strategic Partnership Grants for Projects Fund

The goal of this fund is to increase research and training in targeted areas that could strongly enhance Canada's economy, society and/or environment within the next 10 years.

NSERC funding announcement: http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Media-Media/Index_eng.asp

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