

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

\$50 million Boost For Research in Western Canada

TORONTO, December 21, 2006 — A groundbreaking \$88 million federal investment in national high performance computing (HPC) resources will improve University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) researchers' ability to address some of the most complex and socially relevant research problems in the world today.

UNBC is a partner in WestGrid, one of Canada's seven major HPC consortia that together are creating a pan-Canadian network of HPC facilities. The National Platforms Fund (NPF), built on \$78 million from the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) and \$10 million from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), was announced today in support of this unified HPC strategy. Matching funds from provincial and industry sources will bring total NPF funding to nearly \$180 million.

"Today's announcement is a historic day for Canadian research," said Jonathan Schaeffer, a WestGrid co-principal investigator who led WestGrid's participation in the NPF. "When combined with provincial and industry matching funds, WestGrid will acquire more than \$50 million of computing infrastructure to support research in areas such as climate modeling and prediction, deciphering the human genome and solving compelling problems in science and engineering."

Today's investment marks the first time CFI has identified a specific research infrastructure of strategic priority for the country and brought together all stakeholders — universities, provincial and federal funding agencies — to collaborate on the development of a purposefully shared pan-Canadian resource. UNBC is one of more than 60 partners across Canada.

"This investment opens the door for UNBC researchers to have better access to powerful computing resources, allowing them to compete on a level playing field with the rest of the world," said Patrick Mann, Associate Professor with UNBC's Department of Computer Science and WestGrid's UNBC representative.

The process leading up to the NPF announcement mobilized Canada's entire HPC community — previously operating as separate regional consortia competing for resources — to work together on the development of a unified HPC strategy for Canada. This major investment will ultimately benefit more than 6,000 investigators performing intensive computationally-based research across the country.

"This represents a major leap forward for Canada's HPC community," said Dr. Eliot Phillipson, President and CEO of CFI. "This investment will provide researchers with the tools to solve large-scale computational problems that we could not even have imagined tackling 10 years ago."

The \$88 million federal investment announced today breaks down as follows:

- \$60 million was awarded by CFI under its *National Platforms Fund* (NPF). This new program was designed to provide the Canadian research community with infrastructure and resources that serve the needs of researchers working in a wide variety of research areas at institutions across the country.
- Another \$18 million was awarded by CFI under its existing *Infrastructure Operating Fund* (IOF), which assists institutions with the incremental operating and maintenance costs associated with new infrastructure projects.
- Finally, NSERC has committed a minimum of \$10 million over 5 years to help fund the operating costs associated with the new HPC infrastructure investment.

In addition:

- The \$88 million is expected to be matched by provincial and industry sources to bring the total NPF funding to nearly \$180 million.

WestGrid (Western Canada Research Grid) operates high performance computing (HPC), collaboration and visualization infrastructure across western Canada. With 14 partner institutions across four provinces, WestGrid is Canada's largest HPC consortium. Its partners include all universities in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba as well as the Banff Centre.

The Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) is an independent corporation created by the Government of Canada to fund research infrastructure. The CFI's mandate is to strengthen the capacity of Canadian universities, colleges, research hospitals, and non-profit research institutions to carry out world-class research and technology development that benefits Canadians.

NSERC is a federal agency whose role is to make investments in people, discovery and innovation for the benefit of all Canadians. The agency supports some 22,000 university students and postdoctoral fellows in their advanced studies and funds more than 10,000 university professors every year. Over the last 10 years, NSERC has invested \$6 billion in basic research, university-industry projects, and the training of Canada's next generation of scientists and engineers.

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For more information:

Jana Makar
Communications Manager
Netera Alliance (on behalf of WestGrid)
Tel : 403-210-5489
jana@netera.ca

Douglas Lauriault
Director, Public Affairs
Canada Foundation for
Innovation
Tel: 613- 996-3193
douglas.lauriault@innovation.ca

Erin Acton
Communications Officer
University of Northern BC
Tel: 250-960-5621
acton@unbc.ca