



PRESS RELEASE
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Forest Resources: Unique Partnership between Université Laval and Oxford University is Announced

Montréal, January 15, 2015 – Marc LePage, President and CEO of Génome Québec, was in London today for the announcement of a partnership between Université Laval and Oxford University. The event took place in the company of Premier Philippe Couillard, who was speaking at a conference of the Canada–United Kingdom Chamber of Commerce.

The partnership was formed to create an international consortium in forest genomics. Spearheaded by Professor John MacKay, a world-renowned expert in the field, Full Professor at Université Laval and Wood Professor of Forest Science at Oxford University, the consortium will address the major scientific challenges involving the productivity and sustainability of both natural and managed forests. Expected outcomes include improved health and productivity of forests and their sustainable management. This partnership represents a major opportunity for Québec and Canada.

"I welcome this partnership, which goes to prove Québec's ability to rank among the leading global knowledge societies. It is a significant development for Québec since the forest industry has such a strong foothold in our economy and now faces the challenge of ensuring its competitiveness while pursuing its development in a sustainable manner," said Québec Premier, Philippe Couillard.

"It's an important day for genomics and for Québec, since our researchers are being recognized for their excellence and expertise," Marc LePage said. "Oxford University is home to some of the world's leading researchers, which means it has the privilege of choosing its partners. The fact that Québec was selected is an endorsement of the high quality science being conducted here," he added.

Given their economic significance, forest resources are a top government priority. The need for new approaches to enhance the value and benefits of Canadian forests has become a main concern. Genomics is a powerful tool that can be used to identify the potential of individual trees and lines of trees and, as such, offers innovative solutions to address the challenges of forest sustainability. Many relevant projects in forest genomics are currently underway in Québec – some dealing with the spruce budworm, which is considered by governments to be a major threat to forest health and the lumber industry.

International collaborations are a major force behind the strategies and successes in genomics in Québec. We have access to a rich pool of expertise through our reputable researchers, who are highly skilled in key sectors, such as forestry, but also personalized health care. We are constantly seeking international partners to complement and enhance our expertise. In this respect, the United Kingdom is a major asset. In genomics, it ranks second only to the United States and is at the cutting edge in many areas.

Québec also has several other large-scale international partnerships in areas other than forestry. For example, Professor Jacques Simard of Université Laval is leading a major research project (\$13 million/4 years) on breast cancer in collaboration with researchers at Cambridge University. They have pooled their expertise in epidemiology and bioinformatics to carry forth this major endeavour.

About Génome Québec

Since May 2000, Génome Québec has been the driving force behind the development of genomics in Québec. By supporting nearly 80 projects and 900 researchers and managing the operations of the McGill University and Génome Québec Innovation Centre, Génome Québec is helping to accelerate the discovery of new applications for genomics in strategic areas, such as personalized health care, forestry, the environment and agrifood. The funds invested by Génome Québec are provided by the Government of Québec, the Government of Canada, through Genome Canada, and private partners.

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