

Génome Québec and Université Laval salute the 2nd Conifer Genome Summit

A joint Canada-Sweden SMaRTForests Initiative

Montréal, June 16, 2014 – The second Conifer Genome Summit is being held in Québec this week. The event takes place in the Forêt Montmorency and brings together sixty researchers from Europe and North America. This meeting follows on the first summit held in Sweden last year at the same time, in Björkliden, Lapland above the Arctic Circle.

Open to all members of the forest genomics community, the 2014 Summit will facilitate updates on the most advanced approaches in conifer genome sequencing, assembly and annotation, as well as updates on the interpretation and practical application of the information gleaned from conifer genomes. These summits are essential in order to coordinate the resources and develop the database required for such a wealth of information to be exploited.

“The summit, which came out of a joint Canada-Sweden initiative, was created last year following the publication in *Nature* of the white spruce and Norway spruce genome sequences. It is thanks to large-scale projects such as SMaRTForests that we are able to bring together scientists in genomics, genetics and forest biology to develop international collaborations of this kind, and to position Canada in the development and enhancement of forest health and productivity,” said John MacKay, principal SMaRTForests researcher and Professor in the Department of Wood and Forest Sciences, Université Laval.

“Génome Québec salutes the creation of the second Summit, which demonstrates the importance of international scientific collaboration in this sector. The forest is a priority sector in Québec and Canada, and forest genomics is a niche of excellence that we must continue to develop. Génome Québec has already invested over \$30 million in this sector at Université Laval, because we want to position ourselves among the best. We are especially proud to highlight this joint initiative with Sweden,” declared Marc LePage, President and CEO of Génome Québec.

The Dean of the Faculty of Forestry, Geography and Geomatics at Université Laval, Robert Beauregard, stated that “Université Laval’s leadership in forest genomics is the result of the hard work of two professors, John MacKay and Jean Bousquet. Over the years they have developed a scientific network of such scope that world leaders of today in the field of forest genomics find it only natural that the event should be held here, in the Forêt Montmorency.”

About SMarTForests

SMarTForests is a Canada-wide initiative in the field of tree genomics. With a research budget of \$10 million, this national forest genomics project is funded by Genome Canada, Génome Québec, Genome British Columbia and Genome Alberta. The research is led at Université Laval by Professor John MacKay of the Department of Wood and Forest Sciences, and at the University of British Columbia by Professor Joerg Bolhmann at Michael Smith Laboratories.

The aim of the project is to harness the power of genomics to develop diagnostic markers based on DNA, metabolites and proteins in order to accelerate the selection of spruce species in Canada. Our goal is to enhance and maintain the natural genetic diversity of our forests by identifying the genes responsible for traits such as wood density, growth, resistance to insects and adaptation to climate.

About Génome Québec

Since May 2000, Génome Québec has been the driving force behind the development of genomics in Québec. By supporting over 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 human health, 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 by private partners.

For more information, visit our website at www.genomeQuébec.com

About Université Laval

Located in Québec's historic capital, a World Heritage City, Université Laval is the first French-language university in North America. It is one of Canada's leading research universities, ranking 7th among the country's 94 university-level institutions in terms of research funding with more than \$300 million devoted to research last year. Université Laval's 1,400 professors-researchers share their knowledge with 48,000 students, 10,000 of whom are enrolled in graduate-level programs. www.ulaval.ca

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