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## News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
SEPTEMBER 6, 2002**

### **\$4.35 MILLION CONTRIBUTION HELPS OPEN UP A WORLD OF SMALL WONDERS**

**EDMONTON, AB** - Stephen Owen, Secretary of State (Western Economic Diversification) (Indian Affairs and Northern Development) and Victor Doerksen, Minister of Alberta Innovation and Science, today jointly announced funding of \$4.35 million to solidify Edmonton's leadership in microsystems and nanotechnology, and further advance Canada's Innovation Strategy in the West.

The University of Alberta's NanoFabrication Facility will receive \$1.25 million from Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) for equipment, technical support and related costs. The Government of Alberta, through the Alberta Science and Research Authority, is also providing \$3.1 million to the facility for research infrastructure and equipment. Federal and provincial funding will help expedite the production of microsystems and nano devices by reducing the time and cost it takes to commercialize the results of research and development.

WD's funding also includes \$22,325 for the MicroSystem Technology Research Institute (MSTRI) to support its efforts in assessing pre-commercial research proposals. MSTRI aims to develop and maintain new intellectual property in Canada, while facilitating the spin-off of new companies and technical innovations to Canadian small and medium-sized businesses. The compatibility of the NanoFab's technology base with local manufacturing capabilities provides an opportunity for MSTRI projects to move from prototype to manufacturing. To date, WD has contributed \$2.92 million towards MSTRI/NanoFab while the Province has provided \$3.6 million.

"The NanoFabrication Facility and the MicroSystems Technology Research Institute are working to bring the ideas of Canada's best and brightest researchers to market," said Stephen Owen. "WD's longstanding support of both organizations helps ensure that Canadians benefit directly from the research and resulting commercialization that is key to success in the knowledge-based economy and a priority recognized in Canada's Innovation Strategy."

"The Government of Alberta continues to look for opportunities to grow its knowledge economy. Support of the nanofabrication facility builds on the province's investment in the National Institute of Nanotechnology and will help solidify Alberta's position in this emerging field," said Victor Doerksen. "By continuing to invest in research infrastructure, the province is helping build world-class facilities thereby attracting the best researchers and becoming a centre of excellence for leading-edge research, including nanotechnology."

"Through strategic partnerships and initiatives like the nanofabrication facility, we have laid solid claim to our reputation as one of Canada's finest research intensive universities," says President Rod Fraser. "This collaboration not only enhances that growth, but provides exciting new opportunities for tomorrow's leading researchers." The University of Alberta is contributing \$150,000 to the project.

Funding for the MicroSystems Technology Research Institute and the NanoFab is provided through the

Western Diversification Program (WDP). These projects are designed to support the growth of knowledge-based industries; create a cluster based on local expertise, companies and facilities; accelerate the commercialization and adoption of innovative processes and products; and encourage the diversification of local economies.

Government of Alberta funding, provided through the Alberta Science and Research Authority, is a part of the recently concluded Alberta Science and Research Investments Program (ASRIP) funding competition. ASRIP is a competitive funding program that supports selected science and research initiatives of strategic importance to Alberta. This year, almost \$39 million was provided to 55 projects throughout the province.

Federal funding for this project was provided for in the December 2001 federal budget and is therefore built into the existing fiscal framework.

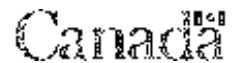
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## **Backgrounder**

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### **Microsystems Technology Research Institute (MSTRI)**

- MSTRI, established in October 2000, supports pre-commercial research projects in microsystems (the convergence of micro-electronics, information technology and life sciences).
- One of the primary goals of MSTRI is to nurture a growing microsystems cluster in and around the University of Alberta. This will involve developing and maintaining connections with existing and start-up companies and working closely with organizations such as the National Research Council, the Industrial Research Assistance Program and the U of A's Industry Liaison Office.
- Working in collaboration with the private sector and public research bodies, the MicroSystems Technology Research Institute helps researchers obtain funding for the further development and commercialization of:
  - Microdetection devices

- Bioanalytical instruments for drug research
  - Health and diagnostic equipment for disease research
  - Sensor development for forensic, environmental & agricultural needs
  - Development of enabling fuel cell technologies
  - Optical switches and devices for enhancing telecommunications & computer network performance
- Alberta Innovation and Science contributed \$500,000 through the Western Economic Partnership Agreement (WEPA) in support of MSTRI operations in October 2001.
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### **NanoFabrication Facility (NanoFab)**

- Unique in Canada, the NanoFab facility is open to researchers from the University of Alberta and other organizations needing to conduct research in nanotechnology. Once receiving training on safety procedures, the equipment and the facility, researchers perform their own fabrications.
- Over 42 research groups, representing nine University of Alberta departments from three faculties, have made use of the NanoFab. In addition, 11 research groups from five Canadian universities have taken advantage of the NanoFab investment.
- Local technology start-up companies such as Micralyne, Zimarc and BigBangwidth represent a few on the growing list of SMEs across Canada that have made extensive use of the NanoFab during their product development programs. Routine NanoFab usage also includes diverse group organizations such as *TRLabs*.
- The new equipment that will be purchased will allow the facility to better serve its research and industry clients by speeding up development time and to better adapt research plans as the work progresses.

### **Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD)**

- Western Economic Diversification Canada is announcing a non-repayable contribution of \$1,227,675 to the NanoFabrication Facility (NanoFab). Funding will be used to purchase equipment, provide technical support and offset related costs for the facility.
- WD is also providing \$22,325 to the MicroSystem Technology Research Institute, also housed in the Electrical and Computer Engineering Research Facility at the University of Alberta. This contribution will expedite technical assessments of MSTRI proposals.
- Recent investments in university-based research have increased the demand for technology commercialization services in Alberta. WD's contribution will help boost technology commercialization at the NanoFab and MSTRI facilities and address key priorities of Canada's Innovation Strategy.
- In 2001, WD contributed \$1.67 million to MSTRI and the NanoFab: \$170,000 covered start-up costs for MSTRI and a \$500,000 contribution went towards operational requirements (through a Western Economic

Partnership Agreement). The Department also provided \$1,000,000 to the NanoFab that went towards the purchase of equipment that is essential for creating basic research infrastructure and in making the facility a full-service, one-stop center for micro and nano-fabrication.

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### **Alberta Science and Research Authority (ASRA)**

- Established by the Government of Alberta in 1994, ASRA is an independent board comprised of 25 members from the business and research communities that provides advice to the provincial government.
- ASRA helps set the strategic direction for Alberta's three priority areas: information and communications technology, life sciences (including agriculture, environment, forestry and health); and energy research.
- Its goal is to enhance the contribution of science and research to the sustainable prosperity and quality of life for every Albertan.

### **Alberta Science and Research Investments Program (ASRIP)**

- ASRIP is a competitive funding program that supports selected science and research initiatives of strategic importance to Alberta. Applications are submitted to ASRA and are reviewed by an external panel of leading internationally recognized scientists and researchers.
- The ASRIP program supports the province's goal of fostering innovation and positioning Alberta in the knowledge economy by funding strategic research in energy, information and communications technology, and life sciences in the following areas:

- **Research Infrastructure**

Investing in strategic research infrastructure at Alberta's educational institutions to increase research excellence and competitiveness to encourage the development of collaborative centres of excellence and to leverage funding, in particular from the Canada Foundation for Innovation.

- **Enabling Research Application and Technology**

Supporting linkages, infrastructure and networks directly related to research application and technology transfer in order to enhance Alberta's capacity to capitalize on the benefits of research and strengthen the partnerships between research organizations and industry.

- **Science Awareness and Promotion**

Supporting science awareness and promotion initiatives to develop a better understanding of the value of science and technology, and to improve the resources available for awareness and literacy, and encourage involvement and careers in science.

- This year, ASRIP will direct almost \$39 million to 55 research initiatives across the province.
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