

News release



September 25, 2010

Governments of Canada, US, Mexico and Alberta support international research in mathematical sciences

It all adds up to excellence at Canada, US and Mexico supported Banff International Research Station

Banff, Alberta -- Mathematics is the core science of our technologically driven, global society. The Banff International Research Station (BIRS), at the renowned Banff Centre, provides a forum for the advancement of and exchange of knowledge in mathematics.

BIRS is a collaboration of Alberta Advanced Education and Technology, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) of Canada, the United States' National Science Foundation (NSF), and Mexico's Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT).

"The Government of Canada is investing in science and technology to create jobs, strengthen the economy and improve the quality of life of Canadians", said MP Blake Richards, on behalf of the Honourable Gary Goodyear, Minister of State for Science and Technology. "Our \$3.25 million investment in BIRS, through the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) will help develop, attract and retain the world's best researchers here in Canada."

NSERC's contribution is an investment made over five years that goes towards supporting BIRS and its operation, which in turn facilitates international collaborations and ensures that world-class mathematical research continues to be conducted in Canada.

"Since its inception in 2003, BIRS has shown vision and leadership in creating an international meeting point for mathematical discovery and innovation," says Suzanne Fortier, President of NSERC. "On this day of celebration, NSERC salutes the many accomplishments of BIRS."

"International collaboration in the sciences is a vital way we're building the knowledge-based next generation economy in Alberta," said the Honourable Doug Horner, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Advanced Education and Technology. "Having leaders in this foundational science working here positions Alberta, and Canada, as a focal point for collaborative solutions to global challenges."

Building on previous Alberta support for BIRS, Alberta Advanced Education and Technology will provide \$3.4 million over five years (2011 - 2015) to facilitate BIRS' future operational plans and activities. The BIRS initiative promises to continue being a significant factor in building excellence in Alberta's research communities and beyond. The new funding support will enable BIRS to provide the infrastructure for an environment that optimizes creative interaction and the exchange of ideas, knowledge and methods within a broad program covering the mathematical, statistical and computational sciences, as well as their applications in science, technology and society.

"Mathematical sciences are a key to innovation and for advancing the frontiers of scientific discovery," said Dr. Cora Marrett, acting director of the US National Science Foundation, which is contributing \$3.68 million to BIRS. "NSF-supported math sciences institutes, such as BIRS, provide ideal settings for synergistic activities within mathematical, statistical and computational sciences, and across various other disciplines. This synergy is important to solving important societal problems related to environment, health, security and sustainability. Beyond that, fostering collaborations among industry, government and academic institutions, without borders, will lead to advances in basic science."

"BIRS represents the only serious joint educational and scientific research program in the NAFTA space," said Dr. José Antonio de la Peña, Deputy Director for Science, CONACyT. "It has given an international visibility to both Canadian and Mexican mathematical sciences as no other project has ever done".

This is a tremendous success for a remarkable and groundbreaking North American collaboration in support of the world's mathematical sciences and their manifestations in science, technology, and society", says BIRS Scientific Director Nassif Ghoussoub. "This unprecedented multinational funding validates the importance, and vigor of the research conducted at BIRS".

BIRS' mandate is to embrace all aspects, both theoretical and applied, of the mathematical, computational and statistical sciences including fundamental challenges of pure and applied mathematics in computing science, statistics, and mathematical physics, financial and industrial mathematics, as well as the mathematics of information technology, and the life sciences. BIRS opened its doors to the world scientific community in March 2003. Since then, over 14,000 researchers from 2000 institutions in 70 countries have conducted collaborative research at BIRS. For more information go to <http://www.birs.ca/>

Background: International collaboration supports mathematics research

Media inquiries may be directed to: Dr. Nassif Ghoussoub, BIRS Scientific Director, Professor at the University of British Columbia

604-822-1649 email: birs-director@birs.ca

Backgrounder

International collaboration supports mathematics research

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Inaugurated in 2003, The Banff International Research Station (BIRS) is a joint Canada-US-Mexico initiative that addresses the imperatives of collaborative and cross-disciplinary research with a focus on the mathematical sciences and their vast array of applications in the sciences and in industry. Its modus operandi facilitates intense and prolonged interactions between scientists in a secluded environment, complete with accommodation and board, and the necessary facilities, for uninterrupted research activities in a variety of formats, all in a magnificent mountain setting.

Every year, the station hosts over 2000 researchers from 400 institutions in more than 60 countries who participate in over 70 different programs. The principal BIRS activities are its annual series of 49 five-day workshops, each hosting up to 42 researchers in disciplines in which mathematics, computer science and statistics are used in novel ways. The format allows scientists to exchange the latest advances in their fields of study and provides an environment that fosters new collaborations and ideas.

BIRS is headquartered at the University of British Columbia, where its scientific program is developed. The station has its own building (Corbett Hall) on the site of the world-renowned Banff Centre in Alberta. This arrangement allows it to provide cost-effective access to collaborative research by securing dedicated space for long-term use, by operating a substantial economy of scale, and by pooling the resources of several governments. The Banff Center is already internationally recognized as a place of high culture. Its programs in music and sound, the written, visual and performing arts, leadership and management draw in many hundreds of artists, students, and intellectual leaders from around the world. The introduction of BIRS, with its stream of creative and imaginative people, into this rich and fertile environment has provided opportunities for some unique synergies.

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology will provide \$3.45 million in support of BIRS over five-years. BIRS is also supported with funding from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) (\$3.25 million), the United States' National Science Foundation (NSF) (\$3.68 million), Mexico's Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnologia (CONACYT) (\$250K), the MITACS network (\$600K) and the University of British Columbia (\$400K). BIRS received \$5 million in initial funding from the partnering agencies in 2001 and \$10 million in funding over five years in 2005.

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology

In Collaboration with Campus Alberta and Alberta Innovates, Advanced Education and Technology strives to build a prosperous province through a dynamic and integrated advanced learning and innovation system built on a foundation of highly skilled people in support of a knowledge-based economy and society in Alberta.

Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC)

NSERC is a federal agency whose vision is to help make Canada a country of discoverers and innovators for the benefit of all Canadians. NSERC supports some 28,000 students and postdoctoral fellows in their advanced studies. It also promotes discovery by funding more than 11,800 professors every year and fosters innovation by encouraging more than 1,500 Canadian companies to participate and invest in post-secondary research projects.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) (USA)

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is an independent federal agency created by Congress in 1950 "to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defense."

Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnologia (CONACYT) (Mexico)

The National Council on Science and Technology responds to the country's priority demands provides solutions to specific problems and needs in ways that contribute to raising the standard of living and the social welfare of the citizens of Mexico by increasing the country's scientific and technologic capacity, competitiveness and innovation in enterprises.

BIRS Scientific Director – Nassif Ghoussoub

The BIRS Scientific Director is appointed by the BIRS board for a five-year, renewable term. Nassif Ghoussoub, Professor at the University of British Columbia, is the founder of BIRS and has been its Scientific Director since 2004. He obtained his Doctorat d'état in 1979 from the Université Pierre et Marie Curie in Paris, France. He was the founding Director of the Pacific Institute for the Mathematical Sciences and a co-founder of the Mathematics of Information Technology and Complex Systems network of centres of excellence

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604-822-1649 email: birs-director@birs.ca