

## College research boosts economy

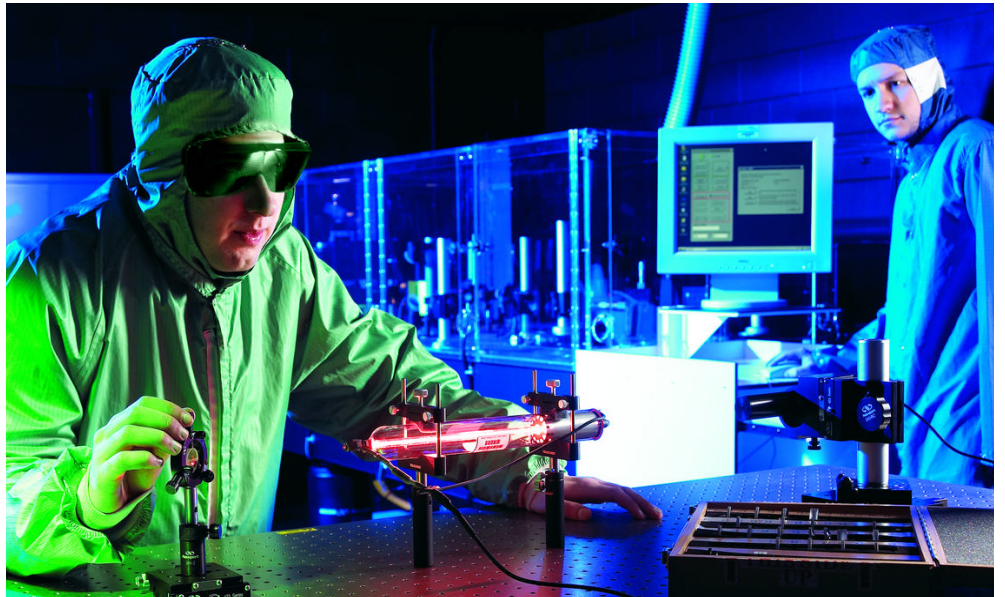
Governments must do more to support college research activities that stimulate economic growth, federal Science and Technology Minister Gary Goodyear says.

Speaking at a recent symposium in Toronto on innovation, Goodyear said Ottawa is investing in applied research projects at colleges because that research helps businesses become more innovative and successful.

"We believe colleges can no longer be left out and, in fact, need to be up front," Goodyear said of the \$6 million in funding Ottawa has provided to Ontario colleges since April. "Support for research is the foundation for economic success."

The Feb. 15 symposium, called Applied Innovation, was held at Toronto's Sutton Place Hotel and was organized by Colleges Ontario. The theme was the need for a greater emphasis on research activity that supports new innovations in small- and medium-sized businesses.

Participants at the symposium included government representatives, business leaders, policy advisers, students, college presidents and others. Dr. Michael Bloom, a vice-president at the Conference Board of



Canada, spoke about a recent Conference Board report that said governments should invest more funding in applied research projects conducted by colleges and businesses.

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"Ontario colleges' applied research is an important catalyst and accelerator of innovation," he said. "We think there's value for money."

Without investments in innovation, Canada's productivity record will remain poor. In 2007, the country's productivity was 25 per cent below the productivity levels in the U.S., compared with just a 10 per cent difference in the 1980s.

Currently, Ontario spends about \$13 billion on research activities, but not much of that money is on "applied" research with any economic benefits. Only two per cent of Ontario businesses do any research.

Participants called for governments to develop new strategies to help more businesses get access to the applied research partnerships available at the colleges.

## Mystery writer wins national award

A Loyalist College professor's first novel has won a national award for mystery writing.

Hilary MacLeod, who teaches Media Studies at the Belleville college, won a CBC Book Club Award last month for her novel, *Revenge of the Lobster Lover*. The novel beat out Stieg Larsson's *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest* and other heavy hitters in online voting.

"It's a bit humbling," she said. "It was fabulous how many people came up to the plate and told me they loved it and supported me. It makes you feel that you owe people so much."

The CBC launched the online books contest last year to celebrate the best in books. In early February, readers were encouraged to vote for their favourites among eight genres. *Revenge*



of the *Lobster Lover* was nominated and short-listed in the mystery genre.

In addition to Larsson's book, other titles competing in the mystery category includ-

ed Giles Blunt's *Crime Machine* and Justin Cronin's *The Passage*. MacLeod and her nearest competitor, author Vicki Delany, were neck and neck for more than a week of online voting.

*Revenge of the Lobster Lover* is a mystery set on Prince Edward Island and also published on the island. MacLeod, who lives in eastern Ontario, spends her summers on Prince Edward Island.

MacLeod has taught announcing techniques and broadcast writing to Loyalist College students for 20 years. She attributes the success of the book to the many students and colleagues she has come to know.

"I know a lot of people by virtue of where I'm working and how long I've been doing it. My strength was the community college system."

### Solar power illuminates school

Thomas Chona has shed light on a serious problem in his childhood village.

Chona, a second-year student in the Alternative Energy Engineering Technology program at Lambton College in Sarnia, applied his hands-on skills to install a solar power system in a new school in the Zambian village where he was raised.

The story goes back to 2004, when Chona visited the village that shares his name —

Chona. He found the primary school in the village in disrepair. The roof of the building had been blown off and no classes were being held.

“It affected me greatly,” he says. “I thought it was about time I did something to help the community and the school.”

Chona returned to Canada and started sending calculators and small classroom items to the village, but felt “it wasn’t enough. I needed to do something considerable.”

After returning to the village in 2006, he decided he wanted to install a solar sys-

tem. He met with the school headmaster and village chief who were thrilled with the idea.

He then returned to Canada and sought help from his church and like-minded individuals. They founded GlobalLight Projects, whose mission is to “assist people in the developing world by means of the application of simple technologies.”

After raising \$10,000, Chona returned to his village last August. When he arrived, he discovered that a local non-governmental organization had teamed up with the community to construct a new school to replace the old one. He joined the effort and had 15 days to install the solar power system.

“Every single villager contributed. Before I left, the building was constructed, the roof was on and I installed the panels on my second last day.”

This is the first phase of three in the project to electrify the village. GlobalLights is now raising \$15,000 to complete the next two phases.

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- Thomas Chona,  
Lambton College

### Improving education in Jordan



Canadore College professor Mark Lamontagne in Amman, Jordan.

Mark Lamontagne, a business professor at Canadore College in North Bay, is helping to transform higher education in Jordan.

He is working with the Jordanian government to restructure the governance of the kingdom’s 14 colleges, to help the colleges improve their training of people for new economic megaprojects in fields such as uranium mining and nuclear power.

“It’s a great opportunity for me to be involved at the college governance and system level, and to help build the type of college system that I really believe in,” he says. “I also believe that this type of work helps Canadore to reflect an international flavour within our programming.”

The project is being funded by the Canadian International Development Agency. Lamontagne, who is taking a one-year leave of absence from Canadore, was chosen for the project because of his past international experience.

Previously, Lamontagne has been to Sri Lanka to set up a distance learning system for the government’s postsecondary system, and to the United Arab Emirates to work on a quality assurance project.

The reform work in Jordan focuses on areas such as college-industry partnerships, international accreditation, effective corporate training and developing models for continuing education.

#### Report calls for more access

A coalition of college and university student groups is calling on Ontario to do more to promote the incentives available to aboriginal and disabled students who pursue higher education.

“It is of the utmost importance that students can access postsecondary education to ensure they are prepared for the workforce and that they remain globally competitive,” said Justin Fox, president of the College Student Alliance, which co-authored a report on the issue.

#### College generates growth

A recently released economic impact study says Durham College in Oshawa is poised to generate more than \$1.2 billion in economic activity in Durham Region over the next five years.

“Durham College has always been a cornerstone of our community, educating many individuals who have gone on to become very successful,” said Roger Anderson, the chair of Durham Region.

#### Recognizing excellence

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is seeking nominations for its Excellence in Education Award, which honours secondary and postsecondary educators in Ontario who have encouraged students in the development of sustainable communities. The call for nominations ends May 31. For more information, go to [www.cmhc.ca/en/inpr/su/su\\_002](http://www.cmhc.ca/en/inpr/su/su_002).

#### Investing in upgrades

Suncor Energy has invested \$500,000 into Lambton College in Sarnia, which will go towards such projects as the modernization of a machine shop and the establishment of a new bio-fuels lab. In total, the company has invested \$1.9 million in the college since 1999.

#### Retraining northern workers

More than 3,000 workers in northern Ontario have been successfully trained for new jobs through the province’s Second Career program, the provincial government says. “Through Second Career, a lot of those people are finding a retraining opportunity and a chance to restart their lives,” Training, Colleges and Universities Minister John Milloy said at an event last month at Confederation College in Thunder Bay.

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