

Government of Canada Strengthens Aquaculture R&D at Vancouver Island University

Nanaimo, BC – Vancouver Island University will expand existing research capacity at the Centre for Shellfish Research by establishing a Shellfish Genomics Laboratory thanks to an investment by the Government of Canada through Western Economic Diversification Canada.

Federal funding of more than \$400,000 was announced today by James Lunney, Member of Parliament for Nanaimo—Alberni, on behalf of the Honourable Rona Ambrose, President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, toward the establishment of a Shellfish Genomics Laboratory at the Centre for Shellfish Research, Vancouver Island University.

“Our Government’s contribution to this project will ensure Canadians are at the leading-edge of shellfish aquaculture,” said MP Lunney. “Shellfish aquaculture has significant economic potential for coastal communities, and this project will be the first of its kind in British Columbia.”

The funding will support and enhance shellfish genomics research capacity in B.C. through the acquisition and installation of genomic science equipment that will examine biological and environmental stress factors inherent in shellfish.

“Shellfish aquaculture is an important component of sustainable coastal economies,” stated Dr. Ralph Nilson, President and CEO of Vancouver Island University. “The Centre for Shellfish Research has taken a leadership position addressing critical research needs and in doing so providing valuable research and learning opportunities for VIU undergraduate and graduate students.”

As a result of this investment, Vancouver Island University will also develop research tools to diagnose stress factors related to transportation, pollution and environment in hatchery-reared larvae and adult shellfish.

“Most people have heard the expression ‘happy as a clam’, but the truth is we do not have any tools to determine if a clam is happy (healthy),” said Dr. Helen Gurney-Smith, who lead the shellfish genomics research program. “Genomic science can provide the necessary tools”.

Vancouver Island University, formally known as Malaspina University – College, was established in 1968 to serve students in the region of Central Vancouver Island and coastal British Columbia. The main campus is located in Nanaimo with regional campuses in Cowichan, Parksville, Qualicum and Powell River. The institution offers a wide range of academic, applied, technical, vocational and development programs leading to certificates, diplomas, and degrees.

Western Economic Diversification Canada is a department of the Government of Canada that works in partnership with the provinces, industry associations and communities to promote the development and diversification of the western economy, as well as to represent the interests of the West in national decision-making.

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