

## **B.C. Regional Innovation Chair in Rural Economic Development**

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**Minister of Advanced Education Murray Coell  
Castlegar**

**Wednesday, November 15, 2006**

I am very pleased to be back at Selkirk College though I must say the weather was warmer when I was visiting your campuses here in Castlegar and in Nelson this past May!

I'm happy to hear that so many of Selkirk's plans have moved ahead successfully since I was here last. The Kootenay School of Arts is now officially part of Selkirk College. You have purchased your very own building in the centre of Nakusp which will ensure the future of adult basic education in the region. And the renovation of the MIR Centre for Peace is progressing nicely.

I congratulate everyone who has worked so hard to make these plans and dreams become reality for the college, and for residents of the West Kootenay Boundary region.

Things have been working out pretty successfully for the province, too, since we came into power in 2001. British Columbia's economy will continue to see strong growth until at least 2010, according to the Credit Union Central of B.C. A ScotiaBank survey found that small business owners in our province are the most optimistic in Canada. And the Chartered Accountants of B.C. reported strong economic growth and job creation in the Kootenays in this year's regional B.C. Check-Up.

It's clear the West Kootenay Boundary region is already part of B.C.'s economic success story. And we believe the region will reach its full potential when all its communities are working together to achieve economic prosperity.

One of the ways our government is encouraging growth and development is through research. We are seeing huge shifts today that affect economic development and diversification, including an aging workforce, new skills and technologies, advances in communication and transportation, and a rapidly changing global economy.

British Columbia's regions need effective, appropriate and practical research to support their economic development decisions in today's changing world. And that brings me to today's announcement.

We are here to celebrate the establishment of the first regional innovation chair in the province! The B.C. Regional Innovation Chair in Rural Economic Development will help us understand the factors that help rural economies thrive and how to work with that understanding to further improve the economy.

The chair will work with local business clusters and organizations, municipalities and community development NGOs, identifying their needs, and producing information and training to help them take full advantage of economic opportunities.

I am pleased to announce that the LEEF B.C. Regional Innovation Chair in Rural Economic Development has been awarded to George Penfold. George is a professional planner who specializes in strategic solutions for communities and organizations.

He has lived in British Columbia for more than a decade. He took his undergraduate and master's degrees at the University of Guelph, and had a very successful career in Ontario before making his trek west.

He has worked as a rural planning officer, as an associate professor at the University of Guelph's School of Rural Planning and Development, and as a planning commissioner on the Commission on Planning and Development Reform in Ontario.

George combines a rich and particularly relevant mix of university-level academic experience with public consultation, training, education and research, facilitation and mediation, organizational development,

municipal planning, and resources policy work. All of this experience complements his background in civil engineering and resources management.

He has received recognition from his academic peers, his professional colleagues, the Province of Ontario, the Canadian Institute of Planners and many others.

So for all of these reasons and more, I am delighted that George has accepted the LEEF B.C. Regional Innovation Chair in Rural Economic Development. Working with the Selkirk Geospacial Research Centre and other college staff, this chair will enhance the economic vitality and sustainability of the region.

I congratulate Selkirk College for playing a leading role in winning B.C.'s first regional innovation chair. And I applaud the wide variety of individuals and organizations who have helped provide the matching funding. We have a mix of private citizens, businesses and local government – all supporting research and innovation in the West Kootenay Boundary region.

The Leading Edge Endowment Fund will contribute one-point-two-five-million dollars to the B.C. Regional Innovation Chair in Rural Economic Development. This funding is part of more than \$56 million provided for 20 B.C. leadership chairs and nine regional innovation chairs by the provincial government through LEEF.

LEEF's board of directors, led by their chair, Dr. Martha Salcudeen, oversees the external review process to select the very best researchers. Dr. Max Cairns, the executive director of LEEF, is here today representing Dr. Salcudeen and the board.

I am proud of our investment in LEEF, and in research chairs like this one. They support our post-secondary institutions' ability to recruit and retain high-quality researchers. And they are drivers of innovations in economic development, environmental stewardship, health care and other public services that will enhance the lives of British Columbians.

Since 2001, British Columbia has invested over one-point-five billion dollars in research and innovation across the province. And we are very pleased with the growing amount of private funding that is going to research projects in B.C.

The result of this combined funding is that more innovative research is happening in B.C. than ever before, providing long-term contributions to our province. It helps create a strong and vibrant economy, a supportive social fabric, a sustainable environment, and safe, healthy communities – both within British Columbia, and worldwide.

Once again, I congratulate Selkirk College and the communities of the West Kootenay Boundary region for recognizing the value of research, and for working together to help make the Regional Innovation Chair for Rural Economic Development Research a reality.

Thank you.