



Backgrounder

Canada Excellence Research Chairs (CERC)

Canada's prosperity as a nation is increasingly based on science and technology and the highly skilled and creative individuals whose talents bring innovations to life. Their ideas spark the creation of new products, services and policies that support Canada's economic competitiveness, strengthen social foundations, sustain the environment and improve the quality of life. These concepts are central to the Science and Technology (S&T) strategy, announced in May 2007, which set out a multi-year framework to improve Canada's long-term competitiveness. Attracting and retaining the best minds in Canada is a government priority.

In September 2008, the Government of Canada launched the Canada Excellence Research Chairs (CERC) program, created in recognition that Canada's future prosperity depends on the ability to attract the highest caliber of researchers to this country. The program will help Canada compete in the international market for research talent by offering prestigious awards with exceptional monetary value to global research leaders. The program will award 20 Chair holders and their research teams with up to \$10M over seven years to establish ambitious research programs at Canadian universities.

Branding Canada as a global centre for research excellence is another government priority that will be achieved with the CERC program. Previous investments in research, including but not limited to the creation of the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Canada Research Chairs program and increased investments in the three federal funding agencies have built a strong research capacity in Canada. The creation of the CERC program will allow universities to capitalize on previous investments and facilitate the pursuit of excellence in research in strategic areas.

The research teams funded through the CERC program will help Canada build a critical mass of expertise in the four priority areas outlined in the Government's 2007 S&T strategy: environmental sciences and technologies, natural resources and energy, health and related life sciences, and technologies and information and communication technologies. It is expected that there will be applications from a broad range of disciplines to advance these priorities.

A highly competitive, two-stage process will be used to award CERCs. In Phase I, universities will compete for the opportunity to establish Chairs in priority research areas. In Phase II, a short list of universities will be invited to nominate up to 40 world-class researchers to compete for the 20 Chairs that will be funded under this program. In the first competition, at least one Chair will be allocated to research under one or more of the priority areas that is of direct benefit to the automotive industry.



Applications and nominations to the program will be peer-reviewed. A prestigious and distinguished arms-length Selection Board, comprised of world-renowned international and Canadian experts, will assess all applications and nominations. The Board members will also include two distinguished Canadians who will serve as the Chair and Vice Chair, the Vice Chairperson of the CIHR Council, the Chair of NSERC Council, and the Chair of SSHRC Council. The Deputy Minister of Industry Canada will sit on the Board as an observer.

The selection will be based on the highest standards of research excellence. No special consideration will be given to applications based on region, size of applying university, or factors other than those of excellence.

The CERC program will bring many important benefits to Canada's universities and to all Canadians. The program will enable universities to attract world-class research leaders who can positively contribute to our global competitiveness and future prosperity. The cutting-edge research conducted by the global leaders who receive a Chair will spur innovation and the advancement of knowledge in this country.

The CERC program is a tri-agency initiative of the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR). The program is administered by the Canada Research Chairs Secretariat, which is housed within SSHRC.