# Backgrounder

## Overview of the Competition in Applied Genomics Research in Bioproducts or Crops

April 20, 2009

In 2006–2007, Genome Canada launched a new initiative by inviting the scientific community to join with stakeholders to identify strategic research themes through a position paper process. Fifty-seven expressions of interest were received and assigned to themes by the international members of Genome Canada's Science and Industry Advisory Committee. The communities involved selected theme leaders who managed the process, which led to the submission of 11 position papers in July 2007. These papers were subjected to an international peer review, and two position papers, one in the area of bioproducts, "Securing Canada's Future Bio-Based Economy through Genomics" and the other in the area of crops, "Crop Genomics for a Healthy Canada," were recommended to the Board of Genome Canada for inclusion in Genome Canada's strategic research portfolio and budget submission to Industry Canada for 2007–2008.

On April 1, 2008, Genome Canada launched a request for applications to solicit large-scale three- or four-year-long research projects that focus on the application of genomics research in the areas of bioproducts and crops or the ethical, environmental, economic, legal and social aspects of genomics research ($GE^3LS$) issues related to these strategic areas.

An international review committee of experts was established and chaired by Dr. Joseph Ecker from the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in San Diego (see attached list of members). The review panel was recruited from top public- and private-sector institutions in the United Kingdom, Europe, Australia, South America and the United States and consisted of recognized experts in crop genomics, microbial genomics, forestry, bioproducts, genomics, proteomics, bioinformatics and related fields. The committee was composed of experts in assessing management and financial strategies and in assessing the ethical, environmental, economic, legal and social issues related to genomics research.

Each application was assessed against the scientific, management and financial (budget and co-funding) criteria. An application considered for funding must have exceeded a threshold of excellence.

The Government of Canada recognizes the important role that research excellence plays in furthering innovation and competitiveness, two main elements of its science and technology strategy. The Government of Canada has made $840 million in ongoing, multi-year investments in Genome Canada, commencing in 2000 and continuing through to Budget 2007 and Budget 2008. In Budget 2009 — Canada's Economic Action Plan — the government announced a $5.1-billion investment in science and technology.