iBOL Secretariat
Biodiversity Institute of Ontario
University of Guelph,
Guelph, ON, Canada N1G 2W1
media@iBOLproject.org
1-519-780-5483

MEDIA RELEASE

International Barcode of Life project gets major funding boost in lead-up to official launch

Guelph, Ontario, April 23, 2010

The International Barcode of Life (iBOL) Secretariat today announced major new funding for the world's largest biodiversity genomics project. Paul Hebert, iBOL Scientific Director, said that four Canadian agencies have made new commitments to iBOL totaling $35 million, raising total investments by these funders to $80 million.

Building on an earlier $5 million award, the Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation today announced another $8.1 million over the next five years to allow expansion of the informatics platform for DNA barcode data.

"Ontario is proud to invest in game-changing research projects – like iBOL – that are being led by the greatest minds in our province," said Minister of Research and Innovation John Milloy. "Supporting this advanced work will drive the future of biodiversity and promote jobs and prosperity in Ontario."

Genome Canada's Board of Directors also gave notice on April 20 that it is extending its support for the iBOL project for another year with a second funding installment of $4.6 million. This follows the $2 million provided by Genome Canada in 2009-10 to initiate the project through its International Consortium Initiative Program.

Dr. Thomas Caskey, Chair of Genome Canada's Board of Directors, said: "Genome Canada is pleased to provide this next installment of funding for this Canadian-led project that will be of immense value not only to scientists but also in applications such as maintaining the integrity of our food supply, battling invasive alien species, and forensic sciences."

Dr. Christian Burks, President and CEO of the Ontario Genomics Institute, said: "The many international partnerships that comprise iBOL, and which are absolutely key to its success, will benefit tremendously from these funding commitments. We anticipate that the funded research and resources at the Canadian node for iBOL will be greatly leveraged by iBOL nodes in other countries that have already committed funds and research efforts to the project, and will help other potential international partners finalize their commitments to participate in iBOL."

"As the iBOL project approaches the end of its one-year preparatory phase, we look forward to official activation of this global undertaking with renewed optimism and determination," said Dr. Hebert. "We are grateful for the vision shown by our federal and provincial governments and by their science funding agencies. Their leadership is enabling an initiative that will transform humanity's relationship with other living organisms."

Dr. Hebert announced that the official activation of iBOL will be celebrated at an event in Nagoya, Japan, on October 24, 2010 during the 10th Conference of Parties (COP10) to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Leaders of iBOL and the CBD Secretariat will use this occasion to sign a Memorandum of Cooperation which establishes a framework for future collaboration between the two organizations.

Meanwhile, groundbreaking for the new Centre for Biodiversity Genomics will take place this summer at the University of Guelph. This $18 million facility, funded by the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation will house the iBOL Secretariat and key infrastructure needed to support iBOL research. The new Centre, which will be the scientific hub for iBOL, is scheduled for completion in fall 2011.

Dr. Hebert also welcomed significant contributions from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, which awarded $1.2 million to support new DNA barcoding research programs, and from Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), which has provided $2.2 million to enable researchers in five developing countries – Argentina, Costa Rica, Kenya, Peru and South Africa – to play key roles in iBOL.

Dr. Faustino Siñeriz, Vice-President of Argentina's National Council of Scientific and Technical Research, welcomed the additional support provided by IDRC, noting that it reinforced his organization's recent decision to upgrade Argentina's participation in iBOL to a Regional Node.

Paul Skelton, Director of the South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity, said that the IDRC funding would make African biodiversity a much more significant part of the iBOL research program. *"*It will provide a major incentive for South African institutions to meet the requirements of Regional Node participation in iBOL while giving organizations and researchers from a wide range of African nations the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from IBOL*,"* Dr. Skelton said.

- 30 -

-

The International Barcode of Life (iBOL) Project is a Canadian-led research alliance which spans 26 countries and brings together hundreds of leading scientists in the task of collecting specimens, obtaining their DNA barcode records and building an informatics platform to store and share this information for use in species identification and discovery. By 2015, iBOL participants will gather DNA barcode records for five million specimens representing 500,000 species, delivering a highly effective identification system for species commonly encountered by humanity and laying the foundation for subsequent progress towards a barcode reference library for all life. iBOL is a not-for-profit corporation governed by a Board of Directors. iBOL's principal funding partners within Canada are the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation, the Government of Canada through Genome Canada in collaboration with the Ontario Genomics Institute, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and the International Development Research Centre.

Contact:

John Chenery,
Director of Communications & Media
Tel: 1-519-780-5483
jchenery@uoguelph.ca