

# \$70 million for high tech

MONTREAL (CUP)—“We’re the envy of every province,” said the McGill Dean of Research about the Quebec government’s new grants for university researchers in high technology fields.

“These new grants are unique,” continued Gordon Maclachlan. “No other province, or federal agency has anything like them.”

The Quebec government has set aside \$70 million over the next five years to subsidise research on the “cutting edge” of high technology. After the five years, promising research will be funded permanently.

“As you might well imagine this makes every professor sit up and take notice,” said Maclachlan. “You don’t have those guarantees in other grants — one year

you’re on and the next you’re not.

Yves Berube, minister of higher education science and technology, announced eight research grants last week for teams at Montreal’s four universities: McGill, Concordia, Universite de Montreal, and Universite du Quebec at Montreal.

These subsidies, each for about a million dollars a year for five years, are for basic research, according to Dr. Paul Albert, vice-president of research at Concordia University.

“Instead of throwing money at industry, or at applied research, they are giving out awards to those involved with fundamental research in new and unexplored fields,” he said.

Dr. Tom Chang at McGill received a grant for his work in correcting genetic mutations.

Inherited genetic mutations like a cleft palate, or hemophilia are caused by missing enzymes in the DNA. Chang identifies the missing factor, constructs an artificial one, inserts it in tiny cells and shoots those cells into the bloodstream. Hopefully, these cells reproduce and eventually outnumber the mutant ones.

Another McGill team that received a grant last week is studying the production of gallium, a metal that promises to replace the silicon chip for fast computers.

“You’ve heard of Silicon Valley?” asked Maclachlan. “Well, the Quebec government thinks we’re going to have a gallium valley here.”

Forty special research teams should be at work by next summer and from the teams Quebec expects new scientific knowledge and a new crop of trained young researchers.

“Even if we produce three times the number of PhD’s we are now in these hot areas, it would still not meet the demand in Quebec alone,” Maclachlan said.

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