

## B.C. math students get funding

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B.C. graduate students in mathematical sciences will receive \$100,000 in funding from the B.C. government in an effort to place student interns into businesses across the province.

The goal is to transfer more math students from the classroom into the workforce. The internship program is being managed by MITACS, a national research network that brings together university researchers and companies.

To date, the internship program has brought about 45 students into B.C. businesses.

### Congress upsets BCTF

The B.C. Teachers' Federation has called for members to boycott next month's teachers' congress, accusing the B.C. government of handpicking participants for a discussion of student achievement in public schools.

BCTF president Jinny Sims accused the government of being "deliberately inflammatory" by not allowing union locals to elect their own representatives to the congress and express their views to Premier Gordon Campbell. Sims noted parent advisory councils are allowed to choose their representatives to a similar congress for parents.

Education Minister Shirley Bond said participants will be "randomly selected" from applications received from individual teachers, to represent a range of experience levels, independent school teachers, and rural and urban school districts.

The teachers' congress is to be held Nov. 6 in Vancouver, and is to be an annual event.

### 'Most vulnerable' targeted

The B.C. government has overhauled its Community Assistance Program in an effort to target people who have "multiple barriers" to employment.

The reorganization moves employment and pre-employment programs to a new B.C. Employment Program, and pays for \$17 million in contracts to 32 community-based agencies. The agencies are to help people get income assistance, mental health treatment, legal aid, drug and alcohol treatment, child care and family services.

The new program follows a pilot project in Vancouver that tracked down people on the streets to

help them get access to welfare and other programs.

The Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance has a \$70-million budget for employment programs, half of which is devoted to skills training under the B.C. Employment program. There is a \$20-million program to help disabled people get jobs, and a \$5 million volunteer supplement program.

### Campbell promotes trade

Other provinces should follow the lead of B.C. and Alberta and remove interprovincial barriers to trade, investment and labour mobility, Premier Gordon Campbell said in a speech in Ottawa Monday.

"If you're a doctor in British Columbia, you're a doctor in Alberta," Campbell told members of the Canadian Club in Ottawa. "If you're a small business in British Columbia and want to expand, expand into Alberta."

The agreement was signed earlier this year and comes into effect in April of 2007. It will create the second largest economic union in Canada behind Ontario.

Campbell also compared federal investment in B.C. seaport, road and airport infrastructure as the modern equivalent of building the St. Lawrence Seaway in the 1950s. The Asia-Pacific region is the new engine of international trade, and Canadians should think of it as the "near West" instead of the far East, he said.

"In the Port of Vancouver, we watched as our container traffic increased by six per cent last year," Campbell said. "In the ports of Seattle and Tacoma, container traffic increased by as much as 18 per cent. The same in California."

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