

For information

LegCo Panel on Commerce and Industry

**Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Biotechnology
between Hong Kong and Canada**

Introduction

This paper informs Members of the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Co-operation in Biotechnology between Industry Canada of the Canadian Government and the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region Government (HKSARG).

Background

2. We are committed to providing an environment conducive to technology development, including biotechnology. Our vision is to develop Hong Kong into a centre of innovation and technology, thereby increasing the added value, productivity and competitiveness of Hong Kong's industry.

3. Given the wide spectrum and application of biotechnology in different economic activities, the Administration has been supporting biotechnology development in Hong Kong. Since the launch of the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) in November 1999, we have supported 49 projects related to research in the area of biotechnology and Chinese medicine with a total funding of about HK\$144 million. Biotechnology is one of the four focus areas of the Hong Kong Science Park, as well as one of the research foci of the Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Research Institute Company Limited.

4. To further biotechnology development in Hong Kong, we also encourage collaboration with other countries so that common areas of interest and potential for collaboration and cooperation in the field of biotechnology could be explored.

5. Canada is one of the leading countries in biotechnology development and is home to the second largest number of biotechnology companies in the world. Canada is part of the global team, which comprises of six leading countries, working on the Human Genome Project, one of the greatest scientific achievements in the history of biotechnology development.

6. Hong Kong has already had some form of collaboration with Canada in biotechnology research. Some Hong Kong companies, with their headquarters based in Canada, have been collaborating with local universities in conducting research in biotechnology, e.g. the development of a system to isolate active ingredients from herbs and the use of Tetrodotoxin for treatment of cancer patients.

7. To further strengthen the cooperation between Canada and Hong Kong in biotechnology, the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau and Industry Canada signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation in Biotechnology on 4 December 2002.

MOU on Cooperation in Biotechnology

8. Both Canada and Hong Kong recognize the rapid change of technological development in the biotechnology industry, and agree that the two parties may have collaborations in the following areas -

- (a) research and development (R&D) of novel chemical and biological entities for the prevention and treatment of diseases;
- (b) science and evidence based R&D of Chinese medicines;

- (c) R&D of diagnostic technologies which will be beneficial to both places;
- (d) population health studies in selected disease states (e.g. cancer, cardiovascular);
- (e) encouragement and facilitation of clinical trials; and
- (f) advancement of genomics, proteomics, bioinformatics and their applications.

9. Under the MOU, both parties agree that the forms of collaboration and cooperation between the two places could include -

- (a) exchange of information and materials on biotechnology subjects of common interest, and establishment of channels for exchange of information as appropriate;
- (b) exchange of biotechnology specialists, professionals and delegations;
- (c) encouragement of liaison with other public agencies, industrial, academic, and professional organizations to promote the areas of interests and cooperation, and provision of expertise and support;
- (d) facilitation and organization of joint programmes including investment and venture capital seminars, symposium, and missions;
- (e) facilitation and promotion of joint trade events, activities and opportunities to encourage commercial ventures;
- (f) provision of opportunities to become acquainted with the organizational structure, statutes, regulations, methods and procedures of each party; and

(g) other forms of cooperation arranged by both parties.

10. With the signing of the MOU, we expect to achieve a better coordination of the cooperative efforts between the biotechnology communities of Canada and Hong Kong. In this regard, more collaboration opportunities among the researchers and biotechnology companies in these two places can be identified, which would facilitate the advancement of biotechnology related research in our universities and the development of the local biotechnology industry.

Advice sought

11. Members are invited to note the signing of the MOU on Cooperation in Biotechnology between the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau and Industry Canada.

Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau
December 2002