



**Genome Québec**  
The Future has Begun



UNIVERSITÉ DE  
**SHERBROOKE**

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**For Immediate Release**

**THANKS TO A NEW INITIATIVE FINANCED BY GÉNOME QUÉBEC, THE  
UNIVERSITÉ DE SHERBROOKE IS ASSUMING A LEADERSHIP ROLE  
IN THE AREA OF CANCER RESEARCH**

**Sherbrooke, November 3, 2006** – Génome Québec and the Université de Sherbrooke, accompanied by Quebec's Premier Mr. Jean Charest, today announced the creation of the **Génome Québec and Université de Sherbrooke RNomics Platform**. This initiative of international scope, launched at the inauguration of the new Functional Genomics Laboratory, will position the Université de Sherbrooke as a leader in the area of cancer research.

Financed by Génome Québec and the Université de Sherbrooke at the level of 2.2 million dollars, the RNomics platform will be integrated with the research activities of the university's faculty of medicine and health sciences. It will offer researchers and clinicians in the university, industrial, and business sectors automated services allowing for high throughput analysis of data on the molecular genetics of RNA. It will allow for the comparative study of normal and cancerous tissues, with the ultimate goal of understanding the formation of cancerous cells.

The creation of the Functional Genomics Laboratory and the RNomics platform was achieved through the work of professors Sherif Abou Elela, Benoit Chabot and their collaborators, who have repeatedly distinguished themselves in the context of world-class competitions. Thanks to the unique and innovative quality of the technologies to be used, the Université de Sherbrooke has moved to the forefront of research into the molecular genetics of RNA, a molecule found in the cells of all living beings. More than 20 highly-qualified persons contributed to the preparation of these facilities.

*"The RNomics Platform is based on technology developed here at the Université de Sherbrooke, in the Functional Genomics Laboratory," explained the Vice-Rector for Research at the Université de Sherbrooke, Professor Edwin Bourget. "This technology allows various gene variants to be studied and their potential link to cancer to be examined. This first-class platform is unique, because it is the only one that uses RNA, rather than DNA. The work of professors Sherif Abou Elela, Benoit Chabot, Raymund Wellinger and their entire team contribute in an exceptional manner to the expansion of research at the Université de Sherbrooke, in Québec and throughout the world.*

*"We are in a position today to make an announcement of such importance thanks to the hard work of Prof. Sherif Abou Elela and his team, who have put forward a unique approach the results of which will help speed up the development of tools for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer, a disease that, again this year, will attack some 154,000 Canadians, including 38,000 in Quebec. We are fortunate to have scientists in Sherbrooke whose expertise is recognized throughout the world, and I would like to take this occasion to pay tribute to them and to stress the importance of their work for Quebec's future,"* stated the premier of Quebec, Mr. Jean Charest.

Also present at the inauguration, the member for Saint-François and Minister of International Relations, Ms. Monique Gagnon-Tremblay, added that *"this new platform will meet a need that has been expressed by partners in academia and industry. By working together, in concert with universities and those responsible for economic development in the region, we can advance further and help stimulate the development of an axis for life sciences of international renown."*

For Génome Québec, this is a major announcement. On one hand, this reaffirms the relevance and efficiency of its business model and, on the other hand, this is the first time the organization has announced the creation of a platform outside of Montreal. *"Our actions and the achievement of our objectives follow directly from the quality of the researchers involved and the projects they develop. Emphasizing our structuring role and supporting our existing resources, wherever they may be, Génome Québec contributes to Quebec's competitiveness by making accessible to the scientific community highly sophisticated equipment and a unique pool of expertise in genomics and proteomics,"* stated the president and CEO of Génome Québec, Mr. Paul L'Archevêque.

This extremely promising new platform will be managed and operated by Génome Québec and will offer the Canadian academic community services at preferential and favourable rates. In line with the model favoured by Génome Québec in managing its two other platforms in Montreal (*the McGill University and Génome Québec Innovation Centre and the Génome Québec and Montreal Heart Institute Pharmacogenomics Centre*), surplus capacity will be made available to the private sector at market rates. Some companies have already shown an interest in this very high-level technology.

Asked about what makes the RNomics platform so unique, Prof. Sherif Abou Elela explained: *"The natural process of gene modification, known as alternative splicing is the basis for certain diseases such as cancer. Given that the study of alternative splicing is very complex, many researchers tend to avoid it. The new platform will place the discovery of RNA biomarkers and therapeutic targets within the reach of all researchers and clinicians."*

## **About Génome Québec**

Génome Québec's mission is to mobilize the academic and industrial sectors with respect to genomics and proteomics research. This private, non-profit organization invests and manages financial resources of more than 300 million dollars from the public and private sectors. Génome Québec is currently managing projects in six broad areas; namely, human health, bioinformatics, ethics, the environment, forestry and agriculture. For more information about Génome Québec and genomics, please visit the following website: [www.genomequebec.com](http://www.genomequebec.com).

## **About the Université de Sherbrooke's Functional Genomics Laboratory**

Created in 2003, the Functional Genomics Laboratory focuses on the analysis of a group of genes linked to cancer. Research projects, under the scientific direction of Prof. Sherif Abou Elela, will lead to the production of a series of markers associated with cancer, which will allow for development of diagnostic tools. Associated with the department of microbiology and infectology in the Université de Sherbrooke's faculty of medicine and health sciences, the laboratory is subsidized by Genome Canada, Génome Québec, the Université de Sherbrooke and by Canadian health research institutes.

-30-

For information and requests for interviews:

Evelyn Dubois, Huguette Marcotte Communications  
Telephone: (514) 527-3983; Cell: (514) 770-3983; ed@hmcom.ca

Caroline Dubois, Media Relations, Université de Sherbrooke  
Telephone: (819) 821-7388; Cell: (819) 560-2373; Caroline.Dubois4@USherbrooke.ca