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Star genomics researcher takes helm of McGill and Génome Québec Innovation Centre

Mark Lathrop recruited back to Canada after years of scientific excellence in Europe

The appointment, announced today, of renowned investigator Dr. Mark Lathrop as the new Scientific Director of the McGill University and Génome Québec Innovation Centre is a major step in positioning McGill and Quebec at the forefront of genomic research.

Lathrop, a native of Alberta and a world leader in genomic research, comes to the Innovation Centre from the Centre National de Génotypage (CNG) and the Fondation Jean Dausset – Centre d'Étude du Polymorphisme Humain (CEPH) in Paris, where he was the Scientific Director.

"We are delighted to welcome Dr. Mark Lathrop to McGill," said Principal and Vice-Chancellor Heather Munroe-Blum. "In addition to his scientific excellence, he is a world-class researcher with a proven track record as a remarkably successful innovator. His arrival bolsters the Centre's position as a leader in genomic science in Quebec, Canada and abroad. We at McGill look forward to working with him in developing this cornerstone of 21st-century scientific discovery."

"We are seeing Mark Lathrop's appointment as an endorsement of the quality of genomics research being performed here in Quebec. The fact that such an outstanding individual is leaving an established Centre abroad to take the lead at the McGill University and Génome Québec Innovation Centre and to take it to the next level, speaks volumes," said Jean-Marc Proulx, President and Chief Executive Officer of Génome Québec. "This is a vote of confidence to what has been accomplished over the last 10 years since the creation of Génome Québec."

"The arrival of this internationally acclaimed scientist to head up the Innovation Centre could not have come at a better time," said Richard I. Levin, Vice-Principal of Health Affairs and Dean of Medicine at McGill. "We are turning a page in medical history with the extraordinary genomic discoveries of this century. Health and patient care are being

transformed into a more personalized, predictive and preventive science, and the Innovation Centre is poised to lead the advance. This recruitment represents a gain not only for us, but also for Quebec and Canadian science and industry.”

Lathrop trained in theoretical statistics and genetics at the University of Washington, following undergraduate and Master’s work at the University of Alberta. After obtaining his PhD, he moved to France, where he was one of the founders of the CEPH, which pioneered international collaboration on the human genome in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1993, he moved to the University of Oxford where he was the co-founder and first scientific director of the Wellcome Trust Centre for Human Genetics, an institute created to apply of genomic approaches to understanding the molecular basis of human disease. At the request of the French government he returned to France in 1998 to found the CNG as the principal national centre for human genetic studies. It has since established itself as the leading centre for large-scale genetic studies in Europe.

Lathrop’s current research focuses on the identification of DNA variants that predispose humans to common diseases – particularly lung cancer, asthma and cardiovascular disease – and to understand their effects in a biological and public health context.

Lathrop has authored more than 500 scientific papers in genetics, genomics and statistics and serves on the editorial boards of several scientific journals. In addition to his role as at the CNG and CEPH, Lathrop is the visiting Professor of Human Genetics at the Institute of Medical Sciences, University of Tokyo. He leads or has led large collaborations with major pharmaceutical partners in disease studies and technology development. He chaired the Scientific Advisory Committee for Life sciences, genomics and biotechnology for health, a 2.3 billion Euro funding initiative within the European Union’s 6th Framework Programme. He has served as a scientific advisor to many initiatives in genomics and related activities, including the UK Biobank (member of the International Scientific Advisory Committee), Cancer Research UK, the British Heart Foundation, the German NGFN, German Helmholtz Foundation, and Genome Canada. Lathrop presently chairs the Scientific Advisory Board for the Riken Center for Genomic Medicine in Yokohama, and he is a member of the Riken Scientific Council that reviews the major public sector investments in physics, chemistry and biology in Japan.

On the Web: <http://gqinnovationcenter.com/>

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About the McGill University and Génome Québec Innovation Centre:

The McGill University and Génome Québec Innovation Centre is a world-class research facility for genomics and proteomics. Founded in 2002, the Centre has developed a world-renowned expertise in complex genetic disorders such as cardiac disease, asthma and Type 2 diabetes, and has become a resource and a networking site for various research initiatives in human health, forestry, infectious diseases, agriculture and environment. Major funding for the McGill University and Génome Québec Innovation Centre is provided by the Government of Canada through Genome Canada, and also the ministère du Développement Économique, de l'Innovation et de l'Exportation of Québec.