



## PRESS RELEASE

### Positioning Quebec as a major player in genomics research

#### Funding for a Québec-China research project into the causes of male infertility

**Montréal, March 9, 2011** – The Fonds de la recherche en santé du Québec (FRSQ), Génome Québec and the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) are pleased to announce the funding of a first project as part of their joint program for research on genomics and diseases, which was launched in July 2010. The project will bring together research teams from Québec and China to better understand the causes of male infertility through innovative genomic investigations.

“Funding joint projects with China is a first for the FRSQ and constitutes a tangible positive outcome of the FRSQ-NSFC Genomics Workshop that was held in Beijing in October 2009. This initiative is in line with our strategy to position Québec as an international leader in health research,” affirmed Mr. Yves Joannette, President and CEO, FRSQ.

Jean-Marc Proulx, President and CEO, Génome Québec, believes that this initiative cements a promising bilateral collaboration. “This structuring project will lead to a better understanding of the genome’s role in human illness and broaden Québec’s horizons. We also hope that it will yield significant scientific breakthroughs. This type of project is in keeping with the collaborative focus of our strategic plan and should mark the start of a productive scientific relationship between Québec and China.”

“We are particularly pleased to be working in partnership with Génome Québec on this joint call for proposals added Dr. Howard Bergman, Vice-President, Scientific Affairs, FRSQ. The next joint scientific workshop with the NSFC will be held in Montreal this fall on the theme of aging and will very likely be followed by another joint call for proposals.”

The FRSQ and Génome Québec will fund the research team from Québec, providing close to \$150 000 for three years. The NSFC will support the Chinese team, granting 450 000 yuans for three years.

Simon Wing, a researcher at McGill University’s Faculty of Medicine, will lead the group from Québec, and Wenming Xu, a researcher at the West China Second University Hospital of Sichuan University in Chengdu will lead the Chinese team. Dr. Wing’s group has developed extensive expertise in mouse models, and the Chinese researchers have built a cutting-edge clinical infrastructure. The merging of these capabilities brings a significant added-value to the project.

Together, experts aim to better understand the causes of male infertility that are attributable to developmental and functional anomalies in sperm cells. More specifically, the teams will explore the role of the HUWE1 enzyme in the normal maturation process of spermatozoa, investigating its role in the modification of sperm DNA structure and whether its function is modified in men who suffer from

infertility. This work could lead to the development of new targets for more precise diagnosis of causes of infertility.

Around the world, one in seven couples is infertile. One-third of fertility issues are suffered by men, one-third by women and one-third by both. Male infertility may be caused by factors such as low sperm output, sperm malformation and sperm excretion problems.

### **About FRSQ**

The Fonds de la recherche en santé du Québec (FRSQ), which reports to the Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Export Trade, supports health research in order to foster the well-being of Quebecers. Its mandate is to promote and provide funding for research, to disseminate knowledge, and to contribute to training, as well as to establish partnerships crucial to the development of Québec's research and innovation system and its international reach.

[www.frsq.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.frsq.gouv.qc.ca)

### **About Génome Québec**

Génome Québec is a private non-profit organization whose mission is to reinforce Québec's innovation system in genomics by financing major genomics research initiatives. The investments of nearly half a billion dollars since 2001 have contributed to accelerate the discovery of new applications, such as screening tests, therapeutic tools in human health or new environmental procedures in agriculture and forestry. The funds invested by Génome Québec come from the Ministry of Economic Development, Innovation and Export Trade of Québec (MDEIE), the Government of Canada through Génome Canada and from private partners. To find out more about Génome Québec and genomics, visit [www.genomequebec.com](http://www.genomequebec.com).

### **About NSFC**

The National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) is an organization directly affiliated to the State Council for the management of the National Natural Science Fund. NSFC supports basic research and some of applied research, identifies and fosters talented researchers in the realm of science and technology, accelerates the progress of science and technology, and promotes the socioeconomic development in China by giving full play the guidance and coordinating role of the National Natural Science Fund from the central government.

[www.nsf.gov.cn](http://www.nsf.gov.cn)

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