Announcing an innovative partnership between Sainte-Justine UHC and Génome Québec

Dawn of a new era for children:
Introducing Canada's first integrated clinical genomic centre in pediatrics

Montréal, October 21, 2013 – Dr. Fabrice Brunet, Chief Executive Officer at Sainte-Justine UHC, and Marc LePage, President and CEO of Génome Québec, are extremely proud to announce the launch of Canada's first integrated clinical genomic centre in pediatrics, an initiative currently at the forefront of global efforts in this area. "We are honoured to have the opportunity to make this partnership a reality in the presence of the Québec Premier, Pauline Marois, and Dr. Réjean Hébert, Minister of Health and Social Services and Minister responsible for Seniors," said Messrs. Brunet and LePage at the official launch.

This highly innovative genomic centre in pediatrics located at Sainte-Justine UHC, the largest mother-child university hospital centre in Canada, will contribute to the development of new solutions to diagnostic challenges in children with genetic diseases. The initiative will transform the quality of care made available to young patients and improve prevention efforts from early childhood. This Canadian first represents a tremendous source of hope for sick children and their families.

"Over 80 percent of genetic diseases are diagnosed in childhood or adolescence," explained Dr. Jacques L. Michaud, a doctor and geneticist at Sainte-Justine UHC. "In more than half of these children, doctors are unable to arrive at a diagnosis, and many years go by before the cause of the disease is identified. With this new technology, we can sequence all the genes of a child's genome, develop a genetic profile in a timely manner, establish a diagnosis and deliver the treatment, if one is available at the time or becomes available in the future. A parent's worst nightmare is not knowing," he added.

Sainte-Justine UHC, whose laboratory is a point of reference in Canada for genetic analyses in children, has developed a unique partnership with Génome Québec, a leading expert in the management of technology platforms for the last 10 years.

As part of this initiative, the team at Sainte-Justine UHC will be in charge of developing the results interpretation strategy, producing reports and validating clinical data.

"Our mission is to improve the health of mothers and children in Québec, and with this genomic centre, we can offer them better diagnostic approaches and therapies to do just that," explained Dr. Fabrice Brunet, CEO at Sainte-Justine UHC. "We will be able to take treatment of pediatric diseases to the next level, whether we are talking about acute illnesses, such as cancer, chronic diseases, such as diabetes or neuro-developmental disorders. The technology will help us diagnose diseases more quickly in a larger number of children and at a lower cost."

Génome Québec, for its part, will spearhead the operation of the platform, including sequencing and bioinformatics analyses. "This is the moment we have been waiting for: genomic technology has now reached the point where, in the very near future, it will be used to treat patients living with genetic diseases, not to mention prevent and screen for diseases to improve public health," explained Marc LePage. He added: "Today's partnership signals an important shift toward personalized health care. It is a stepping stone that will pave the way for future initiatives in other areas, for example, complex diseases."

“Genomic science is growing by leaps and bounds; it is poised to revolutionize health care,” explained Dr. Guy Breton, Rector at Université de Montréal (UdeM). Together, Sainte-Justine UHC and UdeM are making sure Québec is part of this revolution. Our genomic expertise is recognized worldwide and carries hope for better patient care in the very near future.”

This Sainte-Justine–Génome Québec partnership falls in line with major investments made by the Government of Québec in the field of personalized health care.

In addition to serving needs in Québec, the genomic centre will also offer services to Canadian and international markets. This exposure is critical to developing Québec global leadership in the area of clinical genomics in the area of pediatrics and personalized health care.

About Sainte-Justine UHC
Sainte-Justine UHC is the leading mother-child hospital centre in Canada and the second largest pediatric centre in North America. It is also a member of Université de Montréal's extensive network of excellence in health (RUIS). It has a team of 5,153 employees, including 1,392 nurses and auxiliary nurses; 1,036 health care professionals; 520 physicians, dentists and pharmacists; 822 residents and over 250 researchers, 300 volunteers, 3,400 interns and students of all disciplines. The hospital has 484 beds, including 35 at the Marie Enfant Rehabilitation Centre, the only facility in Québec dedicated exclusively to pediatric rehabilitation. Sainte-Justine UHC has been accredited by the World Health Organization as a Health Promoting Hospital. For more details: www.hsj.qc.ca

About Génome Québec
Since May 2000, Génome Québec has been the driving force behind the development of genomics in Québec. By supporting over 80 projects and 800 researchers and managing the operations of the McGill University and Génome Québec Innovation Centre, Génome Québec is helping to accelerate the discovery of new applications for genomics in strategic areas, such as human health, forestry, sustainable development and agri-food.

The funds invested by Génome Québec are provided by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, the Government of Canada, through Genome Canada, and private partners. For more information, visit www.genomequebec.com.

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