

The Government of Quebec and the New Canadian Government Invest in the Creation of an International Biobank

SAGUENAY, Quebec, Aug. 21 /PRNewswire/ -- The Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn, Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development, Mr. Raymond Bachand, Quebec Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Export, Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Montreal region, Mr. Paul L'Archeveque, President and CEO of Genome Quebec, Dr. Richard Lemieux, Executive Director of the Centre de sante et de services sociaux de Chicoutimi, Mr. Real Lallier, Associate Vice-Rector of Research of the Universite de Montreal, and Mr. David Wellis, President and CEO of GenVault today announced the creation of a world-class Biobank.

The Biobank was developed by Genome Quebec, in partnership with the Centre de sante et de services sociaux de Chicoutimi, a hospital centre affiliated with the Universite de Montreal. The Biobank is part of the P3G/CARTaGENE project that was announced on May 22. Primarily created for storing and managing biological samples collected by the CARTaGENE project from 20,000 citizens of Quebec, it will also support other key projects. The Biobank will receive financing of \$9.6 million over three years.

Minister Jean-Pierre Blackburn expressed the region's pride at the fact that local expertise successfully lobbied to have the new facility housed in the Centre de sante et de services sociaux de Chicoutimi. The \$2,130,000 in funding will be used to adapt the premises needed to operate the Biobank and to support quality jobs. "Our country has developed outstanding expertise in the field of health research and human genome decoding. The establishment of the Biobank will enable the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region to carve out a prime place for itself among national and international genetic research networks and, in so doing, improve its international standing. Canada Economic Development's financial participation in an initiative that holds so much promise for the economic diversification of the region is entirely consistent with the new science and technology strategy Canada has put in place to, among other things, strengthen the ties between entrepreneurs and scientists. It is a good illustration of the determination of Canada's new government to adopt principles and policies that will set the stage for economic growth and new business opportunities," stated Minister Blackburn.

Minister Bachand sees this new research infrastructure as the realization of an innovative resource solidly integrated in an international genome research project. "This new scientific infrastructure is strategic for Quebec. It demonstrates our government's desire to support innovation and excellence anywhere it develops. With this investment, we are laying a foundation on the genomics expertise developed here, in the Saguenay-Lac Saint-Jean, to build the innovative, prosperous Quebec we want for future generations."

The Biobank is Genome Quebec's fourth platform. "This is part of the implementation of our business model, which aims to group advanced equipment financed by major projects in genomics and increase its availability to academic and private sector scientists. This way, using the expertise developed in the Saguenay-Lac Saint-Jean, we will help create a formative research tool in Quebec that, thanks to the ties created through CARTaGENE and the P3G international consortium, will become part of a network of major international biobanks that contribute to significant advances in science," said Mr. Paul L'Archeveque, President and CEO of Genome Quebec.

Dr. Richard Lemieux, Executive Director of the Centre de sante et de services sociaux de Chicoutimi, was pleased with the announcement and highlighted the scientific contribution of Dr. Daniel Gaudet's team in the design of the Biobank. He also noted that this new purpose strengthens the position of the CSSS de Chicoutimi as a university centre affiliated with the Universite de Montreal and as a research centre for genomics and biomedical innovation.

"This niche of excellence is a jewel in the crown of our institution, and the region's entire population will benefit from the research activities led in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean."

The Associate Vice-Rector of Research at the Université de Montréal, Mr. Real Lallier, underscored the contribution of Dr. Daniel Gaudet to the advancement of research in the field of genetics and "omic sciences" of population genomics. "The exceptional work done by Dr. Gaudet's team enables scientists from Montreal, the Saguenay-Lac Saint-Jean and the world to network. More specifically, their efforts help further our knowledge of the role of genetic determinants and new technologies, and aim to validate and transfer this knowledge to improve health and prevent disease."

The scientific director of CARTaGENE, Dr. Claude Laberge, mentioned the close collaboration between CARTaGENE and the Biobank and added that this technologically advanced infrastructure was an outcome of the university research link shared with the CSSS de Chicoutimi. "The Biobank is an indispensable component of CARTaGENE, as it will hold the biological samples of all participants in the CARTaGENE project. The Biobank will also become a precursor for the set-up and testing of norms for large biobanks."

San Diego-based firm **GenVault** was chosen to implement the system and technology for archiving and retrieving samples. "GenVault is pleased to be part of this pioneering scientific research endeavour, for the benefit of the study of Canadian population genomics, and ultimately, for the benefit of healthcare in Quebec, Canada, and around the world," said Mr. David Wellis, Ph.D., President and CEO of GenVault.

The mission of Genome Quebec is to mobilize academic and industrial sectors with regard to genomics and proteomics research. This private non-profit organization invests and manages funds totalling over \$380 million from both the private and public sectors. Genome Quebec currently manages projects in six major sectors: human health, bioinformatics, ethics, the environment, and forestry and agricultural sciences. To find out more about Genome Quebec and genomics, visit its Web site at <http://www.genomequebec.com>.

Deeply rooted in Montreal and dedicated to its international mission, the Université de Montréal is one of the top universities in the French-speaking world. Founded in 1878, the Université de Montréal today has 13 faculties and together with its two affiliated schools, HEC Montréal and École Polytechnique, constitutes the largest centre of higher education and research in Quebec, the second largest in Canada, and one of the major centres in North America. It brings together 2,500 professors and researchers, accommodates more than 55,000 students, offers some 650 programs at all academic levels, and awards about 10,000 degrees each year. <http://www.umontreal.ca>.

CARTaGENE will build an epidemiological and biological databank involving the participation of 20,000 Quebec residents aged 40 to 69. CARTaGENE data will provide greater insight into how genes interact and the influence of the environment on these interactions.

GenVault is the leader in providing DNA sample accessibility for genomic discovery, medicine and identification. GenVault serves customers across medical centers, academic institutions, pharmaceutical companies and law enforcement agencies. As a scalable and reliable alternative to traditional freezers and DNA purification systems, GenVault's unique state-of-the-art system entails a dry-state platform enabling the extraction, preservation, recovery and distribution of DNA at room temperature allowing significant space and energy savings.