



**Press release**  
For immediate release

## **A MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH IN QUÉBEC**

**Héma-Québec announces the first database of 22,000 genotyped donors that will facilitate the finding of compatible blood for many patients**

**Génome Québec contributes its leading-edge genomics expertise to this concrete application that will help save lives**

**Montreal, December 18, 2007** – Dr. Francine Décary, President and Chief Executive Officer of **Héma-Québec**, and Mr. Paul L'Archevêque, President and CEO of **Génome Québec**, today announced the creation at Héma-Québec of a permanent database of 22,000 donors genotyped for several blood groups in order to facilitate secure transfusions for patients in Québec. This database will help in locating compatible blood more easily for patients in need of a transfusion of a specific blood profile.

“Héma-Québec is proud to offer Quebecers this new tool of international calibre. We have been looking at genotyping since 2000. Working with Génome Québec enabled us develop this technology much more quickly by acceding to extensive expertise in high throughput automated genotyping and to the necessary equipment. These tests are the concrete outcome of a project made possible by our researchers and the tremendous commitment of all our blood donors, volunteers and partners who contributed to the creation of a tool that will greatly facilitate more than 5,000 transfusions done each year for patients for whom the transfusion process is difficult,” said Dr. Francine Décary, President and Chief Executive Officer of Héma-Québec.

“Génome Québec is delighted of this collaborative effort with Héma-Québec. This agreement is the direct result of the model created by Génome Québec that involves bringing together ultra-sophisticated equipment and technical teams on platforms that are open to everyone. Héma-Québec researchers' use of the expertise of the Génome Québec & Montreal Heart Institute Pharmacogenomics Centre maximizes the benefits of investment in genomics and gives rise to concrete applications that will serve immediately to improve the health of the Québec population,” said Mr. Paul L'Archevêque, President and Chief Executive Officer of Génome Québec.

The teams of Dr. Michael Phillips, a researcher at Génome Québec & Montreal Heart Institute Pharmacogenomics Centre, worked with the team of Dr. Maryse St-Louis and Dr. Réal Lemieux, researchers at Héma-Québec, to develop this unique automated genotyping platform. Today's announcement reflects Québec's leadership in blood group genotyping. Many organizations around the world, particularly in the United States and Europe, are working on developing similar technologies to create blood donor databases. Already, the expertise and know-how of Génome Québec and that of Héma-Québec have served to directly detect the 16 specific genes responsible for the presence of 16 antigens on the surface of red blood cells. This discovery was the subject of an article in the prestigious journal *Transfusion* in 2006.

This technological breakthrough is important. Blood transfusions are crucial in treating a wide variety of diseases. However, in certain cases, especially those where patients undergo frequent transfusions, the body may react against certain red blood cell groups that are transfused by producing antibodies, which complicates subsequent transfusions. When such a situation arises, hospital blood banks often contact Héma-Québec with emergency orders for red blood cells that do not have these blood groups.

**About Héma-Québec**

Created in 1998, Héma-Québec is an organization whose mission is to efficiently provide adequate quantities of safe, optimal blood components, substitutes, human tissues and cord blood to meet the needs of all Quebecers; provide and develop expertise along with specialized and innovative services and products in the fields of transfusion medicine and human tissue transplantation. Héma-Québec is some 290,000 blood donors each year, 16,000 volunteer partners, 1,300 employees and some 457,000 blood products delivered each year to Québec hospitals to meet patients' needs. **Give blood. Give life.** For more information about Héma-Québec and blood donation, visit the Web site at [www.hema-quebec.qc.ca](http://www.hema-quebec.qc.ca).

**About Génome Québec**

The mission of Génome Québec 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. Génome Québec currently manages projects in six major sectors: human health, bioinformatics, ethics, the environment, and forestry and agricultural sciences. To find out more about Génome Québec and genomics, visit its Web site at [www.genomequebec.com](http://www.genomequebec.com).

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