

The Health Sciences Research Community Celebrates the Grand Opening of ICR Discoveries

March 26, 2009 **Thunder Bay, ON** – Northwestern Ontario's first collaborative health sciences research facility is now officially open in Thunder Bay. A complex renovation project which began in 2006 is now complete and the new occupants are moving in.

Members of Northwestern Ontario's science and research community joined government representatives and industry partners in celebrating the grand opening of the ICR (Institute for Collaborative Research) Discoveries building at 290 Munro Street in Thunder Bay.

With 52,000 sq. ft. of research space, the former regional cancer centre is now home to a collaborative research environment which will encourage a sharing of ideas and knowledge translation between scientists and University faculty, providing an added boost to Thunder Bay's life sciences economy. The \$10.4 million transformation project was funded through a variety of sources including grants from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation, FedNor and Industry Canada, and from the City of Thunder Bay.

Almost every square inch of the facility was renovated, with a separate physical plant added to heat and power the building. Ultra-modern benchwork for basic science and prototype development was added to accommodate the growing number of scientists working in the community. In addition, and through a \$250,000 grant from Cancer Care Ontario, a video conference system was installed to allow the science professionals at ICR Discoveries to connect with colleagues at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (TBRHSC), the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, and Lakehead University and in locations around the world.

"This state-of-the art health sciences research facility is home to Northwestern Ontario's first and only pre-clinical research operation and an important piece of our life sciences research puzzle. For the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute (TBRRI), this is where the research process begins: where ideas will be formed and tested and new molecular imaging technologies developed. The collaborative environment encourages scientists to discuss new ideas and work together on research that will change the way we provide healthcare at the TBRHSC and beyond," said Michael Power, CEO of the TBRRI.

Ron Saddington, President and CEO of TBRHSC, said the impact of the work done at ICR Discoveries will be significant to patient care in Northwestern Ontario. "As an academic health sciences centre, to be able to translate research into patient care quickly puts us in an enviable position. The application of research, in a teaching environment, is prized. It truly will be 'bench to bedside' care."

Forty-four construction related jobs were created during three construction phases over the past three years, an example of how a growing life sciences community has broad reach in Thunder Bay's economy.

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“Thunder Bay has been anxiously awaiting this day,” said Mayor Lynn Peterson. “When City Council invested \$5 million towards this initiative it was with the belief that research and innovation are our strongest opportunities to diversify the economy. Today’s opening confirms that we were not only on the right track; we are on the fast track. ICR Discoveries is a prime example of the unique opportunities that will allow Thunder Bay to become known on a global level, as a centre for excellence in research and innovation. The impact of this centre on our community cannot be overstated.”

The building houses four life sciences research companies and research institutes. More than 200 research professionals will call the facility home over the coming years. To date, some 50 research professionals are now working in the facility for the following organizations:

- Canada’s newest molecular imaging and advanced diagnostics research institute, the TBRRI, occupies more than one third of the space with preclinical molecular imaging and biomarker research labs. The TBRRI will be moving basic science and prototype development scientists and technicians into the facility over the next 24 months.
- Lakehead University houses a shared preclinical vivarium and a Cardiovascular Research Lab at ICR Discoveries.
- Genesis Genomics Inc. is a world leader and pioneer in the research, discovery, development and commercial application of mitochondrial DNA ("mtDNA") based biomarkers for a wide spectrum of human diseases.
- The Lake Superior Centre for Regenerative Medicine, Inc. (RegenMed) is a new not-for-profit charitable organization with a vision to greatly increase human tissue donation and supply in Northern Ontario. Their goal is to be one of Canada’s leading state-of-the-art tissue processing centres for products to be used in reconstructive surgical procedures, and to create a biomedical research facility focused on regenerative therapies

The TBRHSC, TBRRI and partners would like to thank and congratulate Manshield, Kuch Stephenson Gibson Malo, DRD Construction, Cuthbertson and AG Engineering for excellent work during the construction of ICR Discoveries.

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