

For immediate release

Nunavut population may provide additional clues to understanding environment-health link

WATERLOO, ON (4 March 2011) – Canadians are increasingly concerned about the impacts of the environment on their health. Leading health researchers from the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) in Montreal and Ontario's University of Waterloo are launching a next phase of the project that aims to shed light on the interactions between health and the environment for citizens in Nunavut.

In a study undertaken by this research team in 2009, the environment was identified as one of the top three health concerns of Canadians. Research increasingly supports the idea that many health conditions, such as food allergies, are triggered or can be exacerbated by environmental influences.

Susan Elliott, a medical geographer at the University of Waterloo and co-investigator of the study, knows that identifying regional variations in the types or incidences of certain health conditions is an important first step in uncovering potential environmental influences – knowledge that could be key to developing strategies for management. The study will continue the research already completed in Northern Canada and begin this month in Nunavut by conducting telephone surveys of citizens.

“We need to better understand the contributing factors in the cause and incidence of illnesses related to the environment and how they may differ across the nation,” says Elliott. “Only then can we develop improved diagnosis and strategies to manage these complex health challenges.”

The survey is funded by Health Canada and AllerGen NCE Inc. AllerGen is a national research network dedicated to improving the quality of life for people suffering from allergic and related immune diseases. AllerGen is funded by Industry Canada through the federal Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Program. The Network is hosted at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

About Waterloo

The University of Waterloo, located at the heart of Canada's Technology Triangle, is one of Canada's leading comprehensive universities. Waterloo is home to 30,000 full- and part-time undergraduate and graduate students who are dedicated to making the future better and brighter. Waterloo, known for the largest post- secondary co-operative education program in the world, supports enterprising partnerships in learning, research and discovery. For more information about Waterloo, visit www.uwaterloo.ca.

About the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC)

One of the world's foremost academic health centres, the MUHC offers exceptional and integrated

patient-centric care, research teaching and technology assessment. Highly committed to the continuum of care in its community and affiliated with the Faculty of Medicine of McGill University, The Montreal Children's Hospital, the Montreal General Hospital, the Royal Victoria Hospital, the Montreal Neurological Hospital, the Montreal Chest Institute and the Lachine Hospital of the MUHC value multidisciplinary service throughout the lifespan, innovative technologies and practices, strategic partnerships and leadership in knowledge transfer. The MUHC is currently carrying out a \$2.25-billion Redevelopment Project on three campuses—the Mountain, the Glen and Lachine—designed to provide healthcare professionals with an effective environment in which to ensure patients and their families benefit from *The Best Care for Life*. The campuses are also anchored in best sustainable-development practices, including LEED® and BOMA BEST guidelines. www.muhc.ca www.muhc.ca/construction.

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To arrange an interview or for more information or, please contact:

Marta Rudyk

Manager, Communications and Knowledge Mobilization

AllerGen NCE Inc.

(905) 525-9140 ext. 26641

rudyk@mcmaster.ca