



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation and Horizon Health Network
Share Details, Say DNA Sequencing Equipment Necessary**
Equipment not publicly owned elsewhere in NB, will not create duplication

Saint John, NB – Almost one week after meeting with the Hon. Victor Boudreau, New Brunswick Minister of Health, representatives of the Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation do not have an answer regarding the purchase of necessary DNA sequencing equipment for the Saint John Regional Hospital.

“After our productive meeting with the Minister on June 9, the decision-making process is taking longer than we thought,” said Jason Downey, Chair of the Board of Directors for the Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation. “Daily media coverage and mounting questions from our donors and community have compelled the Foundation to share details with respect to where things stand. We now need to answer their questions,” added Downey.

DNA sequencing equipment is critical to the Saint John Regional Hospital’s ability, as a tertiary care oncology centre, to continue providing cancer testing and treatment to its patients. In addition to oncology, DNA sequencing equipment is also used in pediatrics, stem cell, psychiatry, neurology, cystic fibrosis and cardiology. Genetic testing is also part of the dynamic research occurring at the New Brunswick Heart Centre at the Saint John Regional Hospital.

“When in place, the DNA sequencing equipment will result in savings of almost \$63,000 to taxpayers, as a result of the reduced need to send testing outside of the hospital to locations like the IWK Health Centre, QEII Health Sciences Centre, Hamilton Health Sciences and SickKids,” said Dr. John Dornan, Chief of Staff at the Saint John Regional Hospital. “Tests are rarely sent to the United States, and only in cases when the needs are highly specialized.

“Testing is not currently sent to the privately owned Atlantic Cancer Research Centre (ACRI) in Moncton, given average costs are \$900 per test compared to the current average of \$468 per test spent by the Saint John Regional Hospital,” added Dr. Dornan. “Under ACRI’s current cost-recovery model, a decision to send testing to this private institute would cost New Brunswick taxpayers an additional \$97,000 per year.”

This equipment is not publicly owned in New Brunswick. It is privately owned, and its use by the public system comes at a high cost.

“That said, this is not an either-or situation, and neither is it one of unnecessary duplication,” Dr. Dornan continued. “This equipment has become a standard of care, and it belongs in both Moncton and Saint John. This has been a critical part of our team approach to clinical care over the past decade. We don’t want to lose this progressive patient-centric team. Doing genetic testing in Saint John does not incur additional costing, whereas sending these tests to ACRI will.



Limiting testing to the ACRI lab will cost us immeasurable dollars in many areas moving forward. As Chief of Staff and a specialist at the Saint John Regional Hospital, this makes me sick.”

In fall 2013, the Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation received approval from Horizon Health Network to fundraise for the purchase of the DNA sequencing equipment. On Feb. 20, 2014, with approval from Horizon Health Network and former Minister of Health, Ted Flemming, the Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation launched The Give – Personalized Medicine – a public campaign to raise and donate \$900,000 to the Saint John Regional Hospital for the purchase of 13 pieces of personalized medicine and DNA sequencing equipment. The Foundation followed all processes to ensure alignment with the broader system. With the generous support of the Saint John community, the Foundation surpassed its goal on Feb. 13, 2015.

“The Foundation followed the rules,” said John McGarry, President and CEO of Horizon Health Network. “Horizon identified the continued development of the Personalized Medicine Program as a key priority for the Saint John Regional Hospital. The decision to fundraise for this project was based on improved patient care and cost savings to the health-care system, and it was approved by Horizon Health Network.”

The Saint John Regional Hospital has been building a Personalized Medicine Program since before 2005. The hospital has the only board-certified clinical molecular geneticist in the province, Dr. Ya-Gang Xie.

“The future of clinical research in Saint John, including our New Brunswick Stem Cell Lab, heavily relies on the ability to analyze DNA at the hospital,” added Dr. Dornan. “Without this equipment, the attraction and retention of physicians and health-care professionals will be jeopardized, as could future research fund grants.”

A Stem Cell research project lead by Dr. Ya-Gang Xie and Dr. Terry Comeau was just awarded a Chesley Research Fund Grant. Without the DNA sequencing equipment, the research project will not be possible.

“We want to continue to dialogue in good faith with the government,” Downey said. “We remain open to partnerships with stakeholders in the health-care system to ensure that together, we can continue to provide the highest level of effective and efficient patient care.”

The Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation has raised over \$80 million to date in support of excellence and innovation in the areas of equipment, mental health, research, education and patient comfort at the Saint John Regional Hospital, the largest health-care centre in the province – providing world-class care for all New Brunswickers.

For more information about the Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation, please visit www.sjrhf.ca.



Note to editors and producers:

A media availability will take place **today at 1 p.m. in the Light Court, Level One of the Saint John Regional Hospital.**

Media will be able to ask questions of the following representatives of the Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation and the Saint John Regional Hospital:

- Jeff McAloon, President & CEO, Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation
- Jason Downey, Chair, Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation
- Dr. John Dornan, Chief of Staff, Saint John Regional Hospital
- Dr. Margot Burnell, Clinical Academic Chief of Oncology, Saint John Regional Hospital
- Dr. David Marr, Medical Director, Saint John Regional Hospital

Stakeholders are also invited to attend this Q&A session.

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