

MEDIA ADVISORY

Quebec City to Host Canada's Largest Ever International Arctic Science Meeting

*Global challenges and opportunities linked to climate change
to be discussed, groundbreaking research to be unveiled*

QUEBEC CITY – December 5, 2008 – Experts in Arctic research from across Canada and 15 other countries will convene in Quebec City next week to discuss the ongoing transformation of the Arctic and what countries can do to address the challenges and opportunities associated with climate change. Hosted by ArcticNet, a Canadian Network of Centres of Excellence, in collaboration with national and international partners, the event is the largest international Arctic science meeting ever held in Canada.

From results on abrupt ecosystem change recorded at Canada's northern edge and updates on Inuit health, to the unveiling of findings about the effects of climate change on Arctic wildlife and the implications of sea ice reduction for Canadian sovereignty and access to resources, the four-day event will highlight projects currently breaking new ground and discovering ways to deal with the escalating issues related to climate change in the Arctic that are being faced at both national and international levels.

WHAT: International Arctic Change 2008 Conference

WHEN: December 9-12, 2008
(Conference program available at www.arctic-change2008.com)

WHERE: Quebec City Convention Centre, 900, avenue Honoré-Mercier, Quebec City

"The extraordinary attendance from all over the circumpolar world illustrates the urgency of coordinating action to face the impacts of warming and modernization in the Arctic," said Dr. Louis Fortier, ArcticNet Scientific Director and Professor at the Université Laval. "With over 570 presentations from all fields of Arctic research, Arctic Change 2008 will showcase the innovative Arctic research essential to developing knowledge and tools to address the rapidly changing Arctic environment."

The Arctic Change 2008 conference includes keynote addresses by **National Inuit Leader Mary Simon**, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (**December 9, 8:50 a.m.**) and **International Inuit Leader Duane Smith**, President of Inuit Circumpolar Council (Canada) (**December 10, 8:50 a.m.**). Ms. Simon will address how climate change is occurring in the Canadian Arctic now, how Inuit are adapting to the changes and why Canadian politicians need to get involved. Mr. Smith, who represents Canadian Inuit internationally, will address how climate change is resulting in sovereignty challenges for Inuit with respect to the significant attention given to exploration and development, and the opening up of the Northwest Passage.

Among the hundreds of projects to be showcased at Arctic Change 2008 – which is expected to draw more than 800 scientists, students and experts in the fields of Arctic research – are:

- **Effect of Environmental Changes (December 12, 1:45 p.m.):** Extreme warming, habitat loss and abrupt ecosystem change is being recorded at Canada's northern edge. **Dr. Warwick Vincent of Université Laval**, will present dramatic changes observed during 2008, including the irreversible break-up of the northern Ellesmere Island ice shelves, with a 60 percent loss of the Serson Ice Shelf and complete loss of the Markham Ice Shelf. Overall, 23 percent of the total area of the ice shelves, comprising the thickest and oldest marine ice in the Arctic basin, collapsed over a three week period.

- **Cancer and Circumpolar Inuit (December 11, 3:50 p.m.):** Cancer is an important public health problem in Canada and abroad. To address the question of whether cancer is increasing among circumpolar Inuit, **Dr. Kue Young of the University of Toronto** participated in an international collaborative effort with research and health officials from Canada, Alaska and Greenland. The project reviewed trends and patterns of cancer among Inuit in Canada, Alaska and Greenland from 1989 to 2003. The study shows an overall increase in cancer incidence over the time period for all the sites combined. The study has found that Inuit are at particularly high risk for lung cancer and lung cancer rates for Inuit in Canada are the highest in the world. Results emphasize the urgent need for primary prevention and screening and the planning of cancer care programs and services.
- **International Polar Year Study Results (December 11, 3:30 - 5:10 p.m.):** With International Polar Year (IPY) — a two-year world-wide scientific program focused on the Arctic and the Antarctic that runs until March 2009 — at its pinnacle, preliminary results from the largest Canadian-led IPY projects will be presented. **Dr. David Barber of the University of Manitoba** will discuss results collected in the circumpolar flaw lead near Banks Island, Northwest Territories from the Canadian Research Icebreaker CCGS Amundsen during its historic 15-month expedition which saw the research icebreaker remain mobile in the ice. **Dr. Barry Smit of the University of Guelph** will discuss challenges faced by Arctic communities sensitive to changes in their environment and initiatives that are being undertaken to adapt to the challenges. **Dr. Dominique Berteaux of the Université du Québec à Rimouski** will highlight preliminary results of current and predicted impacts of climate change on Arctic wildlife.
- **Marine Productivity in a Changing Arctic (December 11, 10:30 - 11:15 a.m.):** Given the crucial role of marine mammals and fisheries to the culture, nutrition and economy of circum-Arctic countries, it is important to understand how changes at the lowest level of the food web are impacting marine resources. **Dr. Jean-Éric Tremblay of Université Laval** and his colleague **Dr. Kevin Arrigo of Stanford University** are studying how changes to sea ice extent and increased freshwater input and organic matter to the marine ecosystem impact nutrients and primary productivity. Comprehensive results from research undertaken during the last year will be presented, linking weather patterns to the implications for productivity on local and hemispheric scales.
- **Recommendations for a Sustained Arctic Observing Network (December 10, 4:20 p.m.):** The Arctic Council — an intergovernmental forum for Arctic governments and peoples — deemed essential a coordinated Arctic Observing Network to generate high-quality data and better document current and predicted changes in the circum-Arctic. To this end, the Council formed an initiating group to develop recommendations to achieve a long-term Arctic-wide observing network as a legacy of the International Polar Year. **Lars-Otto Reiersen, Chair of the Initiating Group, Oslo, Norway** will present an overview of the recommendations to the Arctic Council.

About ArcticNet (www.arcticnet.ulaval.ca)

ArcticNet is a Network of Centres of Excellence that brings together scientists and managers in the natural, human health and social sciences with their partners in Inuit organizations, northern communities, federal and provincial agencies and the private sector to study the impacts of climate change in the coastal Canadian Arctic. More than 110 ArcticNet researchers from 28 Canadian universities and eight federal departments collaborate with research teams from 15 countries.

Media are invited to attend all sessions of the conference. Interview and visual opportunities will be available.

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