



# Charles River Laboratories: New Facility to Develop New Classes of Pharmaceuticals

**A** major investment by a multinational bioscience company strengthens Canada's reputation as a leader in the development of new, more effective pharmaceutical drugs.

Charles River Laboratories (CRL) is an American multinational that partners with global pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, government agencies and academic institutions to develop and test new drugs. Active in Canada since the 1970s, the company employs approximately 8,000 people in 15 countries.

2007 saw CRL construct a \$140 million, 300,000 square-foot facility in Sherbrooke, Quebec. The site will eventually employ approximately 1,000 people, who will collaborate with the 1,600 staff currently located in the company's Montréal facility, 90 minutes away.

CRL needed additional capacity to take advantage of emerging opportunities, but there was no more room to accommodate expansion of the Montréal facility. According to CRL vice-president Christopher Perkin, Sherbrooke offered several significant advantages.

"Sherbrooke is close enough to our Montréal office to facilitate collaboration," he says. "More significant, though, are the services and support available from other organizations in Sherbrooke's Biomedical Park."

## A cluster of valuable expertise and services

The Biomedical Park is a 170-acre site that's home to the University of Sherbrooke complex, which boasts faculties of medicine and pharmacology, a geriatric institute, a teaching hospital and a clinical research centre. The presence of these



Christopher Perkin

anchor tenants has helped convince dozens of pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies to set up shop nearby.

"Sherbrooke Biomedical Park has so much to offer: world-class academic and clinical institutions, well-educated laboratory and life-sciences graduates, and companies keen to provide cutting-edge technologies and services," says Christopher

Perkin. "Furthermore, the Government of Canada and province of Quebec provides numerous incentives, including tax credits for research and development (R&D)."

CRL, in turn, has much to offer Sherbrooke Biomedical Park. As a leading supplier of R&D services to the pharmaceutical industry, the company's presence will help attract and support other tenants, fostering the Park's continued growth.

Another factor in the company's decision to expand is the changing nature of pharmaceutical development — an evolution that Christopher Perkin has followed closely during his three decades in the sector.

"In the modern era, pharmaceutical companies are much more likely to contract out various aspects of drug development and testing," he says. "Part of the reason is that while drugs have become more sophisticated, so too have regulatory requirements. The amount of time, effort and investment required to conduct, analyze and document tests and clinical trials has grown enormously in the past 25 years. As a result, many pharmaceutical companies have chosen to focus on pure research and contract out the development and regulatory work to reliable, respected companies."



## Taking advantage of emerging trends in the pharmaceutical industry

The trend continues to drive the rapid growth of contract-research organizations such as Charles River Laboratories. According to one study, American pharmaceutical companies contracted out approximately \$15 billion worth of R&D work in 2007. This figure is projected to rise by at least 15 percent over the next seven years.

To take advantage of this potential growth, the new Sherbrooke facility is designed to accommodate expansion. The first phase opens in 2009; additional phases will be completed as market conditions warrant. Another unusual aspect of the new facility is the business rationale behind it, according to Christopher Perkin.

“Unlike our other locations, the Sherbrooke facility will initially serve only two clients — both major pharmaceutical companies,” he says. “We enjoy long-term, trusted relationships with these companies. Building a dedicated facility with ready access to scientific expertise, clinical capacity and support services, will improve our ability to meet our clients’ needs. I’m confident that it will prove to be an astute investment.”

New business models are only one of the significant changes underway in the pharmaceutical industry. Another involves the nature of the drugs themselves.

“Thanks to advances in science, researchers are now working on whole new classes of drugs,” says Perkin. “The concept of personalized medicine, for instance, is no

longer as far-fetched as it once was.”

## Researchers develop new classes of drugs

Personalized medicine emerged in the 1990s in the wake of several breakthroughs in genomics research. Scientists have long recognized genetic links to particular illnesses, such as cardiovascular disease and breast cancer; now the research indicates that genes also play a significant role in how

medical science,” says Christopher Perkin, who championed CRL’s decision to build in Sherbrooke. “And I have no doubt that the work done at the new facility will help to improve the effectiveness of pharmaceutical drugs.”



**Charles River Laboratories (CRL), Montréal, Quebec**

people respond to particular medications and treatments.

While pharmaceutical drugs are effective for most people, some patients do not respond effectively to specific therapies. Furthermore, adverse drug reactions and side effects claim many lives each year and drain billions of dollars from the economy. Personalized medicine would see genetic factors influence decisions about therapies. “It’s an incredibly exciting time for

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