

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

The Université de Montréal Biodiversity Centre Opens!

Montréal, March 10, 2011 - The **Université de Montréal Biodiversity Centre** is opening today on the grounds of the Botanical Garden. The new Centre, the result of a partnership between the University and the Botanical Garden and the Montréal Insectarium, two *Espace pour la vie* (Montréal Space for Life) institutions, boasts cutting-edge scientific facilities for research into biodiversity, its preservation and its promotion. The Centre will not only be home to invaluable natural collections and promote knowledge transfer among local and international researchers, but will also increase public awareness of the importance of biodiversity, key to the conservation of species and ecosystems.

"This new Centre is a sign of the value placed by our community on safeguarding our natural heritage. By bringing together so many committed individuals in one place, where they can share their expertise, creativity and innovation, Montréal is becoming a true hub for biodiversity research," noted Montréal Mayor Gérald Tremblay.

"The UdeM Biodiversity Centre is a remarkable example of the benefits of the longstanding partnership between the Université de Montréal and the Botanical Garden. This initiative, founded on our common commitment to conservation, research and education, draws on the strengths of our institutions and is very open to the community," added Guy Breton, Rector of the Université de Montréal.

Charles-Mathieu Brunelle, Executive Director of the Montréal's Nature Museums, emphasized that "the UdeM Biodiversity Centre is a strategic link in the Nature Museums' goal of positioning themselves as a *Space for Life*, committing themselves publicly and launching a daring creative and urban movement. Biodiversity and the underlying concept of interdependence are at the heart of the outreach, research, conservation and education mission shared by the Botanical Garden, Biodôme, Insectarium and Planetarium."

Its mission

Bringing together major Quebec plant, insect and fungi collections, cutting-edge laboratories and dedicated researchers, all under one roof, along with an evolving digitized biodiversity network and a public space for museum exhibitions, the new Université de Montréal Biodiversity Centre is a masterful achievement.

Preserving invaluable collections

A number of precious collections – the Marie-Victorin Herbarium, the Ouellet-Robert entomological collection, the Insectarium's entomological collection and the fungi collection of the Cercle des mycologues de Montréal – will finally be housed in premises perfectly designed to safeguard and showcase them at the same time. Bringing all these collections together in this way will make it possible to share expertise and resources, not to mention the opportunity to digitize phenomenal amounts of data.

Stimulating scientific research

The UdeM Biodiversity Centre has a staff of 13 researchers from the University and the city of Montréal. Its exceptional infrastructure and equipment will make it possible to accelerate the rate at which new species are discovered and to contribute to preserving biodiversity.

Transferring knowledge

As headquarters of the *Canadensys* consortium, which co-ordinates the digitized networking of a large number of biological collections from many universities and botanical gardens across Canada, the UdeM Biodiversity Centre will become a vital hub for knowledge transfer, in particular to support government decision making.

Boosting public awareness

A public space equipped with museographic facilities will serve as a tool for both increasing public awareness of biodiversity issues and promoting the Centre's activities. A first exhibition, **SHARED VISIONS of Quebec Plants**, opening on April 7, will immerse visitors in the delicately detailed world of artist Hélène Richard. They will see how science and emotion go together naturally!

Together for biodiversity

The UdeM Biodiversity Centre is a joint project, with financial support from the government of Canada, through the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), the government of Quebec, the Université de Montréal, the city of Montréal and private donors, at a total cost of \$26 million. The Centre was the brainchild of Anne Bruneau, a Full Professor with the UdeM Biological Sciences Department, Director of the Institut de recherche en biologie végétale (IRBV) and Scientific Director of the Centre, and a team of researchers. Its buildings, an architectural concept by Provencher Roy + associés architectes, meet LEED Gold environmental certification standards.

Information:

Nadine Fortin
Communications Co-ordinator
Espace pour la vie
514 868-3053
nadine.fortin@ville.montreal.qc.ca

Julie Gazaille
Press Attaché
Université de Montréal
514 343-6796
j.cordeau-gazaille@umontreal.ca

Bernard Larin
Press Attaché
Office of the Mayor and the Executive
Committee
514 872-9998

Visual available on request