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Foundation's Ability to Support Sainte-Justine Compromised by COVID-19

CHU Sainte-Justine Foundation asking 50,000 front-line donors to step up in support of its mission

Montreal, April 14, 2020 – The COVID-19 pandemic is a global public health crisis of monumental proportions. The CHU Sainte-Justine Foundation realizes that the resulting economic fallout has had negative repercussions on many donors. Although fully aware of these challenges, the Foundation is today launching an unprecedented appeal, asking anyone who can to donate to its emergency fund, which is so vital to the work of Sainte-Justine's teams in the midst of this crisis.

"Our message is as urgent as it is straight from the heart. If you can, please give," said Maud Cohen, President and Chief Executive Officer of the CHU Sainte-Justine Foundation, pointing out that the mother-and-child university hospital centre is the designated facility for the testing and hospitalization of young COVID-19 patients in Quebec. Given the current circumstances, donors' support is more important than ever before.

"In addition to protecting children and staying safe themselves, our teams must continue to take action on every front while they look after some of the most vulnerable patients in the province," she added. She also emphasized that, during the crisis and beyond, many families have other emergencies to deal with: a cancer diagnosis, a premature birth, a life-threatening accident.

The Foundation is therefore looking for 50,000 front-line donors, not only to provide the vital support required by the teams who are currently investing a phenomenal amount of energy in response to the crisis while continuing to see to priority needs, but also to back essential research efforts.

"Research at Sainte-Justine simply cannot survive without the Foundation's donors," Cohen stressed. **"The challenging circumstances facing our Foundation, combined with the cancellation of the CIHR's Spring 2020 Project Grant competition, jeopardizes the CHU Sainte-Justine Research Centre's activities at this critical juncture."** The centre's remarkable teams are

already working day and night to advance the science and find solutions to COVID-19. A number of particularly promising research avenues have been identified, the impacts of which are poised to benefit the entire population, children and adults alike.

In response to the CHU Sainte-Justine Foundation's appeal, pediatric neurosurgeon Alexander Weil has pledged to make a personal donation of \$100,000, in acknowledgement of the generosity of the 50,000 donors who rally behind this initiative. **"This crisis has raised a number of questions about the future,"** said Dr. Weil, calling for community solidarity. As an example of a young patient who desperately needs Sainte-Justine's help, he mentioned 8-year-old Édouard, who has been having nightly epileptic seizures since age 3. To date, the cause of the seizures remains unknown and impossible to control via traditional techniques. **"We can't turn our back on all those children who will continue to suffer once the pandemic is behind us. Ongoing research is absolutely key in these cases. All of us recognize more than ever just how important our health is. It's our collective responsibility to be vigilant about it and to safeguard our future."**

As part of this campaign, CHU Sainte-Justine Foundation ambassador Guy A Lepage voiced his unequivocal support for parents and healthcare professionals, all of whom are experiencing unparalleled levels of pressure right now and who will also be recipients of the newly implemented emergency fund. **"So many families with a sick or hospitalized child end up in very difficult financial straits and need help to see to basic things like food, transportation and housing as well as to acquire adapted equipment,"** said Lepage. **"Sainte-Justine's teams are there for our children – as they always have been in the past. Only now, they are leaving their own families behind, working countless hours and putting themselves at risk for the sake of others."**

"I think it's our turn now," he said. **"Let's all show we support them and make sure they know, 'We are here for you.'"**

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Source: CHU Sainte-Justine Foundation

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About the CHU Sainte-Justine Foundation

The CHU Sainte-Justine Foundation's mission is to engage the community and support the CHU Sainte-Justine in its pursuit of excellence and its commitment to providing children and mothers with one of the highest levels of health care in the world, now and in the future. fondationstejustine.org