



ATLANTIC RURAL CENTRE

## NEWS RELEASE

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### New lab helps protect the health of rural Atlantic Canadians

*The Atlantic RURAL Centre unveils the new Environmental Health Laboratory*

**For immediate release**

**(November 24, 2008, Halifax NS)** The Atlantic RURAL Centre celebrated the Grand Opening of their new Environmental Health Laboratory today. This research laboratory is the first of its kind in Atlantic Canada and Dr. Judith Guernsey, Director of the Atlantic RURAL Centre, says it will greatly expand our capacity to examine questions about the physical environment in relation to human health. "Before now, it has been profoundly difficult to understand the intricacies of these exposures and how they influence human health. The instrumentation and expertise associated with this lab will now enable us to undertake research studies that will assess, very closely, aspects of the physical environment like air quality or contaminants in soil and how they influence health. The data we collect may then be used by the public and by our regional and national government partners to make well informed decisions based upon local data. We are highly grateful to the Canadian Institutes for Health Research and to the Atlantic Environmental Sciences Network of Environment Canada for making this all possible."

With its strong focus on monitoring and analyzing the full range of compounds found in the human environment, the Environmental Health Laboratory "will give our researchers access to exceptional analytical capabilities to apply to our study of the environment and its specific impacts on human health," says Dr. Mark Gibson, research scientist at the Centre and the driving force behind the lab.

"As one example, our new lab houses a highly-specialized gas chromatograph that allows us to collect and analyze volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the air. This capability is unique in the region and gives us the tools to investigate the effects of VOCs in residential and commercial properties, as with sick building syndrome, as well as in our outdoor environment." Dr. Gibson says having instruments like these here in Halifax means there is no more waiting for results from distance laboratories. Projects of an urgent nature can be bumped directly to the front of the queue.

Well on its way to establishing itself as a centre of research excellence, the Environmental Health Laboratory has recently been awarded a \$465,000 contract to study the residential indoor air quality of 50 homes in Halifax. Health Canada awarded the contract and will use the data to improve indoor air quality, and update their *Exposure Guidelines for*



– cont'd from 1 –

*Residential Indoor Air Quality.* Other environmental research projects on the horizon will focus largely on air quality issues but will also include soil and water studies as the laboratory grows.

The Environmental Health Laboratory is located in the Industry Partnership Facility at the National Research Council Institute for Marine Biosciences in Halifax.

#### **About the Atlantic RURAL Centre**

Initiated in partnership with Environmental Canada's Atlantic Environmental Sciences Network in 2004 and funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Atlantic RURAL Centre is a partnership between: Dalhousie University, Memorial University, Mount Allison University, Nova Scotia Agricultural College, NSCC Centre of Geographic Sciences, Saint Mary's University, the University of New Brunswick, and the University of Prince Edward Island. The RURAL Centre promotes research development, collaboration, and knowledge translation between researchers, government agencies, concerned citizens and rural Atlantic Canadians.

Through research and other initiatives, the Atlantic RURAL Centre seeks to make a positive impact on the lives of rural Atlantic Canadians.

– 30 –

**For high quality photos and more information, please visit the Atlantic RURAL Centre Website:  
<http://www.theruralcentre.com> or contact:**

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