

**May 14, 2014**

**M E D I A   R E L E A S E**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CARPHA’s New Laboratory Promises Faster Detection and Response to Control Disease Outbreaks in the Caribbean**

**Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, May 14, 2014:** The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) is now better equipped to perform faster and safer detection and response to infectious disease outbreaks in the Region. Thanks to the Government of Canada’s Global Partnership Programme (GPP), which donated a fully equipped Biosafety Level 3 (BSL-3) laboratory to CARPHA, the first of its kind in the English-speaking Caribbean.

The new laboratory was handed over to CARPHA by His Excellency Gérard Latulippe, the High Commissioner for Canada to Trinidad and Tobago during a ceremony held at the Agency’s headquarters at Federation Park, Port of Spain, this week.

Speaking at the handover ceremony, High Commissioner Latulippe said “In our modern age, disease knows no boundaries.” He added that “Isolated disease threats can very quickly become regional or global menaces, posing serious threats to the health, safety and security of people the world over.” In this regard, the High Commissioner explained that this new laboratory is intended to strengthen biological security, biological safety and biological risk management across the Caribbean. He further indicated that the GPP works collaboratively at the “health-security interface” to address biological threats of shared concern and responsibility to health and security sectors.

Dr. C. James Hospedales, Executive Director of CARPHA, pointed out that the movement of international travelers, as well as the increased volume of global food trade can facilitate rapid disease outbreaks among countries. “Having the capacity to rapidly detect, diagnose and respond to disease outbreaks, natural or deliberate, is of paramount importance towards safeguarding our economies,” he said.

Minister of Health of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Fuad Khan, also emphasized the importance of this facility upgrade, “This first class laboratory will enable us to be even better prepared for any emergencies that can be caused by pathogenic agents through early detection and enhanced response capabilities.” He added that this is of significant importance to the Caribbean, even as we seek to combat diseases such as the recently detected Chikungunya virus.

The CARPHA laboratory is currently the only laboratory in the English speaking Caribbean with the capacity to detect and diagnose cases caused by the Chikungunya pathogen. Dr. Hospedales indicated that “The new facility will in time allow us to strengthen surveillance and conduct operational research on this Chikungunya virus.”

In addition to the laboratory facility, which cost CAD \$2.5 million, the Canadian Government also provided sample collection kits, with the cooperation of PAHO in 2012, valued at CAD \$950,000.

Dr. Yitades Gebre, Advisor, Family Health and Disease Management at the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) and Jeff Serle, Senior Vice President of Germ Free Laboratories, Florida, USA, manufacturer of the laboratory facility, also delivered remarks at the hand-over ceremony.



### **Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA)**

#### **Communications Unit**

16-18 Jamaica Boulevard, Federation Park, Port of Spain  
Trinidad and Tobago

Tel: (868) 622 4261

Fax: (868) 622 2792

[www.carpha.org](http://www.carpha.org)