MEDIA RELEASE
For Immediate Release

Boris family makes $6 million gift to Alcohol Addiction Research at St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton
Gift gives hope to families and honours the memory of the late Peter Boris

Tuesday, May 3, 2011, Hamilton, Ont., — This morning, during Mental Health Week, the Boris family (founders of Mountain Cablevision) announced a remarkable $6 million gift to alcohol addiction research at St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton. The announcement comes just weeks after the sudden passing of Owen Boris on April 9. But the gift was in the works long before then.

“Dad was captivated by the idea that if we could map out the brain, we could perhaps better understand the mechanisms that affect addiction-related behaviour,” said Owen’s son, Leslie Boris. “Our father and our family had already committed to this gift to St. Joseph’s. We were working out the details of today’s announcement when dad died…but we all knew that he would’ve wanted us to carry on, to make this important announcement, both for him, and for my brother Peter,” he continued.

The Boris family has a sad but special connection to alcohol addiction. Owen’s youngest son, Peter Boris, struggled for much of his youth and adult life with alcohol addiction. “Peter passed away just two years ago...he was only 44,” said Leslie and Peter’s sister, Jackie Work. “We watched the devastating effect addiction had on Peter, and we all felt the impact it had on our family. The impact was so deep that we knew we had to channel the despair we felt into something good. Peter’s struggle inspired us to make this gift, to give hope to other families like ours,” she said.

The $6 million gift has two distinct, but related purposes at St. Joseph’s Healthcare:

- $3 million will be used to establish The Peter Boris Chair in Alcohol Addiction Research. The Chair will expand the boundaries of knowledge surrounding alcohol use disorders and addictions in the hopes of improving the clinical care and outcomes of those living with the condition. St. Joseph’s will initiate a recruitment process for an international lead in addiction research to hold the appointment.

- $3 million will be used to create The Peter Boris Alcohol Addiction Research Centre at St. Joseph’s new West 5th Campus. The research centre will foster the link between research and clinical care of people living with addiction.

Dr. Robert Zipursky, vice-president of Mental Health and Addiction Services at St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton and Chair of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster University, spoke at the event about the impact of this gift, which is the largest gift to research the hospital has ever received.
“The effects of alcohol addiction on individuals and their families are devastating. The importance of a gift like this, one that will help us to better understand alcohol addiction so that we can treat it more effectively, will certainly have an impact on those living with alcohol addiction in our community as well as provincially and nationally,” said Dr. Zipursky.

Dr. Kevin Smith was also at the event and thanked the family for their visionary gift. “It takes true benevolence to turn a tragedy into a transformative gift and that is what the Boris family has done. This $6 million gift will help the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are living with alcohol addiction. On behalf of St. Joseph’s, thank you for your investment in the health of our region, and thank you for your belief in St. Joseph’s and the world-class research and care our staff is honoured to provide,” he said.

Sera Filice-Armenio, president and CEO of St. Joseph’s Healthcare Foundation concluded the event by offering her own words of thanks to the family. “This gift from the Boris family is the largest gift to research at St. Joseph’s. It’s also the largest gift to mental health in our history. It’s quite possibly one of the largest gifts to alcohol addiction research in Canada. What makes this gift so special is the motivation behind it. The Boris family’s desire to give hope to the families of loved ones living with alcohol addiction.”

Celebration of Life for Owen Boris
The Boris family would like to remind friends and family that a Celebration of Life for Owen Boris will be held on Thursday, May 5 from 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum. The museum is located at 9280 Airport Rd., in Mount Hope, Ont. For driving directions, please visit www.warplane.com.

About St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton and its Foundation
St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton is an acute care, teaching and research hospital with three sites and is affiliated with the Faculty of Health Sciences at McMaster University and Mohawk College. St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton is the regional lead for mental health and addiction services serving a collective population of almost two million people. For more information, visit www.stjoes.ca. St. Joseph’s Healthcare Foundation is the fundraising arm of the hospital. It works with individuals, corporations and foundations who are interested in supporting the hospital that has been caring for this region for more than 120 years. To learn more, visit www.stjoesfoundation.ca.

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