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## ORGANIZATION BACKGROUNDER

Getting to Know Cancer is an independent, all-volunteer, public-interest Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that was launched in 2011. The organization is based in Nova Scotia, Canada. It is supported by a large advisory board of cancer researchers from prominent scientific research institutions around the globe. The organizations' mission is two pronged. The first goal is to share holistic, scientific knowledge about cancer with key stakeholders to bring about improved risk assessment practices and societal changes that reduce the public's exposure to disruptive environmental agents (i.e., those that can act in concert with one another to instigate cancer). The second goal is to inspire applied integrative research that will lead to a "broad-spectrum" therapeutic approach (i.e., one that can reach many targets simultaneously) as a means of preventing cancer in high-risk patients, complementing standard treatments and prolonging the survival times of patients who are at risk of relapse.

### THE HALIFAX PROJECT

- A year-long, NGO-led research project involving more than 350 cancer researchers from 31 countries.
- 24 cross-functional teams working on two challenging problems
- Two important workshops being held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada in August 2013
- Project results to be published in planned special issues of two top-tier, peer-reviewed cancer journals (i.e., Oxford Journal's *Carcinogenesis* and Elsevier's *Seminars in Cancer Biology*)

### TASK FORCE 1

This task force is comprised of 12 cross-functional teams that are focused on the possibility that complex mixtures of commonly encountered chemicals in the environment may be capable of carcinogenic effects. To date, there has been an emphasis on finding individual chemicals that are "complete" carcinogens, but advances in cancer science have shown us that cancer can be enabled by a series of key events, and chemical exposure research has shown us that many of these key events can be independently instigated. At the same time, it is now also known that many chemicals have surprisingly potent low dose effects. So this task force is studying the possibility that low dose exposures to mixtures of environmental chemicals may be contributing to the high rates of cancer incidence that society is currently facing.

### TASK FORCE 2

This task force is also comprised of 12 cross-functional teams focused on the development of a "Broad-Spectrum" integrative therapeutic design. Current chemotherapies focus either on killing cancer cells with cytotoxic chemicals, or stopping the disease with chemicals aimed at one or two cellular targets, but cancers of all types often harbor a great variety of mutated forms of immortalized cancer cells, so there are frequently unique subpopulations of cells that are resistant to both therapy types. Combination chemotherapy aims at multiple targets to combat this problem, but toxicities associated with current therapies make the pursuit of more than just a handful of targets impossible. This task force will draw on recent advances in science to develop a non-toxic, broad-spectrum approach that will be aimed at many prioritized targets simultaneously. If successful, this unique approach will allow us to better prevent cancer in high-risk patients, complement standard treatments and prolong the survival times of patients who are at risk of relapse.