



**For Immediate Release**

## **ORBIS's Global Medical Volunteers Open Eyes in Developing Countries on a Hospital with Wings**

**Toronto, ON, November 17, 2011** – Thirty-nine million people worldwide are blind, but 80% of them do not have to be. With a mission to save sight and eliminate avoidable blindness worldwide, ORBIS recruits and sends volunteer medical professionals into developing countries—where 90% of the world's blind live—to strengthen the capabilities of local health care professionals to prevent and treat blindness.

At the core of ORBIS is its flagship **Flying Eye Hospital**, the world's first eye hospital with wings and most recognizable icon in the fight against avoidable blindness. The ORBIS Flying Eye Hospital kicked off the Toronto portion of its Canada Goodwill Tour today, opening everyone's eyes to how ORBIS is saving sight throughout the developing world.

From November 17 to 19, this world-class DC-10 surgical and teaching facility is expected to attract over a thousand visitors to Toronto Pearson International Airport from across the Greater Toronto Area. The ORBIS Flying Eye Hospital will be open for scheduled public tours all three days, allowing guests to explore the plane that has been converted into a fully functional eye hospital and meet members of the dedicated flight crew. Torontonians can also attend a Grand Reception the evening of November 18 and mingle with ORBIS's volunteer medical professionals and learn more about the organization's sight-saving missions in 2011 and 2012.

For more event information or to donate to give the gift of sight, please visit [www.orbiscanada.ca/FEHToronto](http://www.orbiscanada.ca/FEHToronto) or call 416-413-7925 or toll-free at 1-877-ORBIS-CA (672-4772).

“ORBIS has made a significant contribution to better the lives of people in developing countries, giving them the chance to build a brighter future with improved eyesight,” says Donald Stewart, Chief Executive Officer of Sun Life Financial. “We are pleased, once again, to be the presenting sponsor for the Canadian tour of the ORBIS Flying Eye Hospital and help raise awareness of the fight to eliminate avoidable blindness.”

ORBIS relies primarily on volunteers to realize their vision, drawing upon an international faculty of more than 500 volunteer ophthalmologists, nurses, anesthesiologists, biomedical engineers, and other critical support personnel to deliver eye care training and treatment in the most underserved regions of the world. There are currently approximately 45 Canadians who volunteer their time to participate in ORBIS's global sight-saving missions.

“ORBIS volunteers donate their time, knowledge and energy to enable learning and improve the quality of patient care around the world,” said Lisa Lisson, president of FedEx Express Canada, Aviation Sponsor of the Goodwill Tour. “For almost 30 years, FedEx has volunteered its pilots and aircraft maintenance crew to help power the ORBIS Flying Eye Hospital and restore sight around the world.”

ORBIS's medical volunteers join an internationally renowned cadre of experts in ophthalmic care. In 2011, the ORBIS Flying Eye Hospital went to Syria, Laos, Nigeria, Mongolia, and just returned in October from its final mission of the year to Peru.

"Volunteering with ORBIS has been one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my life," says Dr. Shaun Singer, ORBIS Volunteer Faculty and Medical Director of the Kensington Eye Institute in Toronto. "I have been amazed by the quality and dedication of my surgeon counterparts in developing countries, who are committed to providing the best care possible to their communities despite very limited resources. Continuing medical education is an uncommon privilege in developing countries. I strongly urge more Canadian medical professionals to volunteer their time on ORBIS's missions abroad to transfer their sight-saving skills and see first-hand the difference they can make." As an ORBIS Volunteer Faculty, Dr. Singer has travelled to Jimma, Ethiopia in 2006 and to Vientiane, Laos in 2009.

The ORBIS Flying Eye Hospital began with a vision that airplanes can be more than a means of transportation of passengers and freight, when Dr. David Paton, founder of ORBIS International, observed on his trips to developing countries that access to quality eye care was insufficient. With a team consisting of members of the aviation and ophthalmic community, the dream of a mobile teaching hospital became reality in 1982.

Onboard the ORBIS DC-10 aircraft are several unique features. The first is a 48-seat classroom where local doctors gather for lectures, discussions, and watch live broadcasts of surgical procedures being performed in the operating room. The audiovisual room allows viewing of surgeries in the classroom and elsewhere on and off the aircraft, and participants can pose questions to operating surgeons during the surgery via a two-way audiovisual system. There is also a laser treatment room which contains laser-based diagnostic tools and laboratory stations used for surgical practice training. In addition, the lower deck of the aircraft contains an equipment laboratory and technical center where ORBIS biomedical engineers teach host-country technicians how to maintain and repair ophthalmological equipment.

The ORBIS Flying Eye Hospital Canada Goodwill Tour is proudly presented by Sun Life Financial and supported by Aviation Sponsor FedEx Express and Program Sponsor Canadian International Development Agency. ORBIS is also grateful to its Global Corporate Supporters Alcon Laboratories, FedEx Express, Fondation L'Occitane, OMEGA, Pfizer, Standard Chartered Bank, and United Airlines.

This event is supported by local sponsors Allergan Canada, Atlantic (HS) Financial Corporation, Aqua Technologies Inc., Focus Communications Inc., and Kelvin Young Photography. Media sponsors of the Toronto Goodwill Visit include A1 Chinese Radio, Fairchild Television, Sing Tao Newspapers Limited, and Toronto Sun.

## **ABOUT ORBIS CANADA**

ORBIS Canada is part of a non-aligned, non-profit global development organization whose mission is to prevent and treat blindness by providing quality eye care to transform lives. ORBIS draws upon an international faculty of more than 500 volunteer ophthalmologists, nurses, and biomedical engineers, approximately 45 of them Canadian, to deliver eye care training and treatment in the most underserved regions of the world. Since its programs were first launched 29 years ago, ORBIS has benefited people in 89 countries, enhancing the skills of 88,000 doctors and over 200,000 nurses and other medical professionals. Medical and eye treatments have been provided to 15 million patients, of which 4.7 million are children. Support from Canadian donors is instrumental in the implementation of their global sight-saving programs. Website: [www.orbiscanada.ca](http://www.orbiscanada.ca)

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