



## NEWS RELEASE

BC's second Francophone *StrongStart* program

### A new service for Francophone families in Vancouver

Richmond, BC, (October 28, 2008) - The *Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (CSF)* (BC's Francophone School District – SD No 93) and the *Fédération des parents francophone de C.-B.* (BC's Francophone Parents Federation) celebrated earlier today the official opening of the very first Francophone *StrongStart* BC (*Franc départ*) centre in Vancouver and only the second one in the province. *Franc départ* is housed in École Anne-Hébert, at 7051 Killarney St., Vancouver.

Funded by the Ministry of Education, the *Franc départ (StrongStart BC)* Anne-Hébert program in Vancouver was implemented in order to assist the province's children in getting the best possible start in life. Some 165 programs are presently offered within primary schools in British Columbia with the support of their local school districts in their respective communities.

"Parents and caregivers in Vancouver will be able to drop into the new centre with their children to get them learning and interacting with others in a fun school environment," said Wally Oppal, MLA for Vancouver-Fraserview. "The StrongStart BC Centre at École Anne-Hébert will be successful because our community is committed to seeing our children ready to read, learn and have fun at school."

"We know that early intervention is key to successful learning," said Education Minister Shirley Bond. "The Anne-Hébert StrongStart BC centre will help francophone children in Vancouver build a strong foundation so they can reach their full potential, both in school and in life."

Implemented by the CSF, the *Franc départ* Anne-Hébert centre will be open to the Francophone families of Vancouver who wish to take advantage of this free service. The program focuses on literacy and numeracy, fostering optimum development in the preschool years (0-5 years of age). The program will also facilitate the children's acquisition of the French-language. The new centre was developed in partnership with BC's Francophone Parents' Federation (*Fédération des parents francophones de C.-B.*) and will provide families with networking opportunities as well as access to a wide selection of tools designed to foster the child's well-being and development.

"We take great pride in celebrating Vancouver's first *Franc départ* which is located in École Anne-Hébert, BC's first Francophone public school created 25 years ago," stated Ms. Marie Bourgeois, chair of the board of trustees of the Conseil scolaire francophone. "The *Franc départ* program will have a direct impact on academic success and feeling of identity of our learners. While improving their linguistic and social skills, parents will have access to much needed Francophone resources and will be able to establish a healthy relationship with their community school."

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LA FIERTÉ FRANCOPHONE S'APPREND AUSSI À L'ÉCOLE

For Ms. Pauline Gobeil, President of the *Fédération des parents francophones de C.-B.*, the creation of *Franc départ* programs in CSF schools represents an advancement in the offering of quality early childhood and family programs and services. "The opening of the *Franc départ* centre at the École des Pionniers de Maillardville last winter proved the strong interest of some 35 families from the Port Coquitlam area. We are confident the level of interest will be as strong for the *Franc départ* program at École Anne-Hébert."

At the *Franc départ* Anne-Hébert centre, children and parents will find a welcoming environment and support from an early childhood education specialist. Children who come accompanied by an adult will have access to a wide range of games favouring experimentation in order to enhance social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. The accompanying adult will come away with practical ideas for home activities.

*Since its creation in 1995, the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique offers educational programs and services geared towards the growth and cultural promotion of the province's Francophone learners. An active partner in the development of British Columbia's francophone community, the Conseil has presently in its system, and distributed across 78 communities in the province, over 4,200 students and 40 schools, which includes 23 homogeneous schools.*

**Reference:**

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