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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COMMUNIQUÉ

Regional Literacy Action Plan Will Help Improve Literacy Rates in Atlantic Canada

(St. John's, Newfoundland) The Atlantic ministers of education and training announced today steps to support literacy in families, in public education, in adult literacy and in the workplace, with the launch of *Literacy: Key to Learning and Path to Prosperity – An Action Plan for Atlantic Canada 2009-2014*. The launch was held at École des Grands-Vents in St. John's and was attended by Honourable Darin King, Newfoundland and Labrador Minister of Education; Honourable Roland Haché, New Brunswick Minister of Education; Honourable Donald Arseneault, New Brunswick Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour; Honourable Gerard Greenan, Prince Edward Island Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development; and Honourable Allan Campbell, Prince Edward Island Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning. The Honourable Marilyn More, NS Minister of Education and Minister of Labour and Workforce Development, could not attend due to legislative commitments.

The ministers of education and training have had a long-standing history of collaborative work in literacy and this plan continues that strong relationship. "As a region, we are committed to raising the level of literacy of all Atlantic Canadians. Low literacy skills have a negative impact in the lives of children and adults, and we call on all Atlantic Canadians to take action," stated Gerard Greenan, PEI Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and CAMET Co-chair.

Ministers of education and training intend to work with their provincial colleagues having responsibilities for early childhood development and education to identify specific actions that will promote early literacy learning for early-age children. Early intervention is desirable to provide early-age children the necessary support for school readiness.

The Literacy Action Plan outlines specific actions that ministers intend to undertake to promote literacy in public schools. Ministers will pursue literacy initiatives to increase professional knowledge and skills in teaching literacy; assess, track and improve literacy learning outcomes for all students in the context of diverse backgrounds and abilities; enhance curriculum leadership; and improve literacy capabilities for learning in all areas of the curriculum.

Ministers also wish to impress on the significance of formal and ongoing teacher literacy training, as well as increased professional development opportunities for teachers. Ministers recognize teacher training as a vehicle to improve literacy in the schools. Ministers are resolved to work with post-secondary institutions to integrate literacy skills' teaching as a key component of teacher pre-service training programs, and to collaborate on professional development once teachers are in the field.

Ministers of education and training recognize that higher literacy rates are a key driver for the overall well-being of the Atlantic provinces and the region's ability to achieve prosperity. This action plan embraces four major themes related to adult and workplace literacy that will contribute to the

development of a highly skilled labour force and position Atlantic Canada to prosper within the knowledge economy. These encompass raising awareness of the socio-economic benefits of improving literacy and essential skills and to encourage employers and industry groups to value literacy and essential skills programs; eliminating barriers to learning opportunities and assure relevance and value to the learner; increasing professional standards, knowledge and skills in teaching/facilitating adult literacy and essential skills; and improving the quality and effectiveness of adult literacy and essential skills delivery.

Allan Campbell, PEI Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning and CAMET Co-chair, stated, “This regional action plan will further complement existing and planned provincial initiatives. A regional approach is desirable for Atlantic Canada to be a competitive force in the global economy.”

Atlantic Canadians have shown a persistent gap in achievement relative to the Canadian average, and low literacy skills can have a profound impact on citizens’ lives. Ministers recognize that improving literacy in Atlantic Canada is a responsibility that all citizens must share. This action plan complements current and planned measures undertaken by provincial governments, community groups, the private sector, labour groups, and the public to promote literacy within each province.

Ministers have also taken concrete steps to further promote literacy with the completion of curriculum and assessment resources for use in schools across the region:

- ⇒ Entry to Grade 9 – Achievement Standards and Exemplars in Reading and Writing
- ⇒ Entry to Grade 3 Mathematics Assessment Kits for English and French Immersion Programs
- ⇒ Programme de français de la 11^e et la 12^e années
- ⇒ Objets d’apprentissage – Sciences de la 5^e à la 8^e année
- ⇒ Two Intensive French Units for Grades 7-9

These resources support improved outcomes in literacy and numeracy and provide new, engaging and custom-designed resources for specific and unique needs of Atlantic Canadian students (see backgrounder for additional details on these resources).

Literacy: Key to Learning and Path to Prosperity – An Action Plan for Atlantic Canada 2009-2014 can be downloaded at www.camet-camef.ca, and was prepared in response to the call of the Council of Atlantic Premiers, who endorsed the actions undertaken by their ministers of education and training as outlined in this action plan. The regional Literacy Action Plan complements the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) *Learn Canada 2020* goal of raising literacy levels in Canada.

The Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET) is an agency of the Council of Atlantic Premiers (CAP) and its purpose is to enhance cooperation in public (Entry-Grade 12) and post-secondary education in Atlantic Canada by working together to improve learning, optimize efficiencies and bring added value to provincial initiatives.

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Backgrounder attached

BACKGROUNDER

Achievement Standards and Exemplars in Reading and Writing (Entry to Grade 9)

Standards for reading and writing for grades Entry (K) – 9 have been developed. This project also includes samples of student work (exemplars) which serve to illustrate the standards. The standards are set for students at the end of K (Entry), and grades 1 to 9, and describe an appropriate and strong achievement level in reading and writing performance.

The achievement standards are intended to establish common expectations in reading and writing among Atlantic Canadian educators. The standards address the question, “How well should students be able to read and write independently by the end of each grade level?” The standards will help teachers to identify students and/or groups of students who are performing at grade level, those who may require some intervention, and those who may require enrichment. The standards will also enable provinces and/or school districts to set improvement goals using the standards as benchmark data.

Entry to Grade 3 Mathematics Assessment Kits (English and Immersion)

The Atlantic Canada Mathematics Assessment Resource (E-3), includes assessment questions and sample responses for all the learning outcomes found in the Atlantic Canada Mathematics Curriculum. The primary use of each kit is as an assessment for learning (formative) tool to assist teachers in planning instruction to improve learning. The resources may also be used as an assessment of learning (summative) tool to provide information on student achievement at any given time of the school year.

Programme de français de la 11^e et la 12^e années

The new French program uses both literary works and media texts to help students better express themselves orally and in writing. The program favours production and encourages participation in projects in order foster identity building.

Objets d’apprentissage – Sciences de la 5^e à la 8^e année

An interactive CD covering three themes: heat, fluids and a teaching toolkit. The toolkit explains the nature of science, cognitive abilities and teaching strategies (conceptual network, previous concepts, science notebook, analogy and assessment). The other two sections deal with scientific concepts related to heat and fluids. This program is a real virtual course on teaching science. It uses a number of strategies to explain specific scientific concepts and to equip teachers to transfer this knowledge in the classroom.

Two Intensive French Units for Grades 7-9

Two model units of work suitable for Intensive Core French Follow-up have been developed. These units of work focus on students at the intermediate level. The units provide French second language teachers with useful information on how to welcome students from the Intensive French program into their classrooms along with students who have followed the regular Core French program. The units have been developed to improve the teachers’ understanding of the Intensive French program and allow them to offer a differentiated approach for the whole class.