

November 6, 2006

SCHOOLCHILDREN HELP VANCOUVER AQUARIUM OPEN NEW LEARNING CENTRE

Vancouver, BC: Local schoolchildren participating in the Vancouver Aquarium's education programs were on hand this afternoon to help Aquarium board members, staff and volunteers, and special guest Colin Hansen, BC Minister of Economic Development, open the Aquarium's newest building, Aquaquest – the Marilyn Blusson Learning Centre.

Aquaquest is designed to LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) Gold standards, and is slated to be the first LEED Gold building in a zoo or aquarium anywhere.

The 52,000 square foot 'green' building is home to three new classrooms as well as:

- the new Canaccord Capital Exploration Gallery, which features interactive exhibits,
- a Windows on Research area,
- an enhanced Clownfish Cove play learning area for young children,
- a theatre,
- an environmental newsroom, and
- administrative spaces.

Aquaquest's environmental newsroom uses state-of-the-art technology and digital media in innovative ways to connect people, animals and ideas, encouraging discussion and seeking solutions to important issues of the day.

"What is so important about Aquaquest is how it enhances our capacity to touch millions of people throughout Canada and around the world for the betterment of our aquatic environments," says Aquarium President Dr. John Nightingale. "When we can put people together with the living world, we know awareness increases and inspiration occurs. Aquaquest gives us new spaces and new capacities to connect our visitors and millions across BC and Canada to what is happening in our amazing world."

Aquaquest was inspired by the Aquarium's commitment to educating children, inspiring action in conservation and enhancing the community through economic, cultural and social means. The Aquarium hosts more than 80,000 students in school programs annually and has touched the lives of over 1.2 million BC students since it opened in 1956.

Aquaquest triples the Aquarium's capacity for delivering educational programs to BC students, ushering in a new era of leadership in aquatic learning and conservation education.

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"Knowledge of science, biology and how to protect the environment are essential components of British Columbia's world-class education system," said Colin Hansen, Minister of Economic Development. "Aquaquest will help inspire future scientists or marine biologists and I'm pleased the provincial government was able to provide funding for this important project."

This project has been made possible in large part through a \$5 million gift by leading Canadian philanthropists Marilyn and Stewart Blusson, \$8.2 million in funding from the Government of British Columbia, \$2 million from the Canada-British Columbia Infrastructure Program and \$1 million from Western Economic Diversification Canada specifically for green building development. The following community leaders have endorsed the Aquarium's education mandate with their leadership level support for Aquaquest: Canaccord Capital, The Vancouver Foundation, The Barker Family, Phillips, Hager and North Investment Management, The Peter and Joanne Brown Foundation, Brooke Wade, Mary Jordan, RBC Royal Bank, The Rix Family Foundation, London Drugs Foundation, Imperial Oil Foundation, CIBC and the Molson Foundation.

"The partners in Aquaquest support the Vancouver Aquarium's commitment to educating children, inspiring conservation and enhancing the community," said Dr. Nightingale. "Their contributions will help us engage and inform a new generation of Canadian students as to the wonders of aquatic life and the connections between the aquatic world and humanity."

The name 'Aquaquest' embodies the essence of the facility, which will be a place where BC schoolchildren can embark on a journey of aquatic exploration with hands on learning experiences in wet lab classrooms and galleries that are unmatched anywhere in Canada.

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