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(Education)

### New francophone school for St. John's

Today, Judy Foote, Minister of Education, and Pearl Lee, chair of the Conseil scolaire francophone provincial, announced plans to build a new francophone school in St. John's. The expected design and construction time is 24 months, which would see the new school open in September 2003.

"I am pleased to announce our plans to build a new state-of-the-art school for the francophone community in St. John's," said Minister Foote. "I have asked officials in my department and at the francophone school board to begin developing plans and specifications for a new school facility immediately. An architectural consultant will be appointed to assist in designing the facility so that it best meets the needs of the francophone community."

"The Conseil scolaire francophone fully supports the decision to construct a modern facility dedicated to French First Language education in the St. John's area," said Lee. "This new school will create the ideal environment for French language and culture to flourish in this province."

The new French First Language school will be a state-of-the-art facility, equipped with networked computers in every classroom and instructional area, a science laboratory, a technology education area, a guidance centre, a learning resource centre, and a modern gymnasium specially designed to accommodate students with physical disabilities. The building will also incorporate a mechanical ventilation system to ensure the comfort and safety of students, teachers and staff. The school grounds will include a landscaped green area, as well as a paved parking lot.

"The long-term objective for the francophone community is to expand this new school into a larger francophone school-community centre," said Minister Foote. "To help them reach their goal, officials of the Department of Education have begun funding discussions with federal representatives of the Department of Canadian Heritage in order to eventually expand the new school so that it forms part of a modern school-community centre." The Department of Canadian Heritage has a mandate nationally to support the development of the official languages minority communities (francophones outside Quebec and anglophones inside Quebec).

For the last three years, the Department of Education and the Conseil scolaire francophone provincial have been searching for a new facility to house the French First Language school in St. John's. "Given the surplus space in the region, it was prudent to examine all available space to determine if a suitable facility already exists. Unfortunately, we were not successful in obtaining an appropriate site to house the school on a permanent basis," added Minister Foote.

In areas of Canada, such as St. John's, where francophones are in a minority, school-community centres are viewed as critical instruments both to support the education of French First Language students, K-12, and to promote the development and enhancement of the French language and culture.

Minister Foote congratulated Ms. Lee and the other volunteer trustees of the Conseil scolaire francophone provincial for their vision and commitment to the education of French First Language students as well as the board staff.

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