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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Education

### **NEW, GREEN DUCHESS PARK SECONDARY OFFICIALLY OPENS**

PRINCE GEORGE – The official opening of Duchess Park Secondary showcases government, district and community innovation, announced Prince George-Valemount MLA Shirley Bond and Prince George-Mackenzie MLA Pat Bell.

“As a former student at Duchess Park, I am honoured to be able to participate in the opening of this new school building,” said Bond. “From the 220-seat auditorium to the outstanding athletic facilities and its collegiate design, this school is well-equipped to meet the diverse needs of students and staff today and into the future.”

The new \$39-million Duchess Park Secondary is built to Leadership in Energy and Environment Design (LEED) standards and is currently proceeding through certification for LEED Gold status. Green design features include the use of wood from sustainable forest practices, a ground source heat exchange system, storm water management, automatic controls for heating, cooling and ventilation, and enhanced use of natural lighting.

“In schools, as with all public buildings, we strive to be on the leading edge of environmentally-responsible construction,” said Bell. “This energy efficient, state-of-the art facility can’t help but inspire students and promote learning.”

Under the terms of an agreement between the Prince George school district (SD 57) and the City of Prince George, 3.26 hectares of land, including the site of the original school, will be developed as recreational park land for Duchess Park students and the greater community. The land-swap agreement allows for the future development of a Canadian Cancer Society lodge in Alward Park.

“This innovative partnership resulted in reduced costs for the school district and tremendous long-term benefits for the Prince George region,” said Education Minister Margaret MacDiarmid. “In the spirit of the province’s Neighbourhood Learning Centres, Duchess Park is another shining example of a school district working together with the broader community to ensure public funds produce the most public good.”

In addition to the land-swap, the City and SD 57 have entered into a joint-use agreement that will provide additional amenities for the school. Community groups will have access to the school’s three full-size basketball courts and large auditorium – the only facility of its kind in the downtown area available for lectures and conferences. In exchange, future development of all-weather playfields on the school grounds will be funded by the City of Prince George.

The Province and district worked together to incorporate French Immersion and francophone programs at this school. Having both French language programs under one roof will help to improve student learning and enhance cultural opportunities for all students. The French language program includes 250 French Immersion students and 50 students from the Conseil scolaire francophone (SD 93).

“This replacement school has come about through community support and collaboration between multiple levels of government,” said board of education chair Lyn Hall. “While we now say goodbye to a school building that has served this neighbourhood for more than half a century, we know the long tradition of excellence will be carried forward in the new Duchess Park Secondary.”

Since 2001, the Province has invested nearly \$54 million in school capital projects for Prince George. During the same period, government has spent more than \$1.7 billion to complete 80 new and replacement schools, 148 additions, 26 renovation projects and 22 site acquisitions across B.C. All new and replacement schools have been constructed to meet the latest seismic standards.

By the end of 2009-10, the Province will have committed more than \$3.8 billion in school capital and maintenance projects.

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