

***The Gift of Reading* celebrates giving out its 400,000th book!**

Montreal, May 4, 2015 – As the 16th edition of its *Gift of Reading* program comes to a close, the Literacy Foundation is proud to announce that it has given out its 400,000th brand new children's book to a child living in an underprivileged neighbourhood. This year alone, some 40,000 books will be given to children aged 0–12 across Quebec. The Foundation also wishes to underscore the generous involvement of its spokesperson, actress Salomé Corbo, who took up this role this year for the first time: "Sometimes all it takes is a little window to see the world around us more clearly," stated Ms Corbo. "Giving a child a new book is like breaking through a wall, bringing the light pouring in, and allowing him or her finally to discover the realm of the possible." The *Gift of Reading* program is aimed at preventing the reading difficulties that can lead to young people dropping out of school and then to illiteracy.

Targeted distribution

Since 1999, across the province, hundreds of thousands of new books have thus been distributed in the community.

This year, **40,022** books were collected from the general public and children's book publishers. Since fall 2014, the program has benefited from the collaboration of 250 bookstores and libraries, and more than 100 collection activities organized by companies and individuals wishing to be involved in this fine cause. All these books have been sorted and placed in categories for distribution in the region from which each donor came. Book distribution activities will thus be held in May 2015 in a good number of the 546 recipient establishments throughout Quebec: elementary schools, daycare centres, *Famille* grassroots organizations, and non-profit organizations.

Since one of the program goals is to engage children's interest in reading from the earliest age, some 17,000 books will be distributed to children aged 0–5.

Raising awareness in several generations

In the context of the book distribution, the Literacy Foundation's mission is also to raise parents' awareness as to their role as educators and models. "It often happens that parents with low reading proficiency undergo literacy training so as to be able to read their children stories or help them with their homework," stated Foundation CEO, Diane Mockle. An information sheet on the *Info-Alpha* referral line (1-800-361-9142) is included with each book given to a child, with a view to reaching parents with poor reading skills.

Thank you to the invaluable partners of *The Gift of Reading*!

The Foundation acknowledges its loyal partners for their support, which year in year out guarantees the success of *The Gift of Reading*: Quebec Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research (MEESR), Naître et grandir, Nationex, Hydro-Québec, Salon du livre de Montréal and *ICI Radio-Canada*.

The Literacy Foundation's mission is to support adults and children in order to ensure the development of their ability to read and write so they can participate fully in society. To support the Foundation, make a donation at fondationalphabetisation.org/en.

– 30 –