

## ***Canadian Astronaut Promotes Reading Among Youth***

### ***The Canadian Library Association and Canadian Space Agency Partner to Launch Children's Contests in Canada's Public Libraries***

(Ottawa, August 11, 2006) -- August 27<sup>th</sup> marks the day Canadian Space Agency astronaut Steve MacLean will blast off the Earth aboard Space Shuttle Atlantis and become the first Canadian to operate Canadarm2 in space and second to perform a spacewalk. It also marks the beginning of the "Launch Your Future with Reading!" contests being introduced by the Canadian Library Association (CLA) and the Canadian Space Agency. This is a cooperative effort to encourage young Canadians to read and become part of the next space generation while celebrating MacLean's mission.

The "Launch Your Future with Reading!" contests are open to Canadian children nine to 14 years of age and are being promoted through local public libraries. Participants have until September 30<sup>th</sup> to enter the question-and-answer contest, or the essay contest, which draws on their creative spirit to write a 250-to-600-word essay about a magical book that transports them onto Steve MacLean's space shuttle.

For the question-and-answer contest, the best five questions selected will be answered by Canadian astronaut Steve MacLean. As for the essay contest, the most creative and well-written story will be selected from each of the two age categories in each official language. Winners will receive a Steve MacLean mission kit from the Canadian Space Agency and will be given a gift-certificate for their local bookstore. In addition to the prizes, each winner will have his or her name and entry posted on the CLA and Canadian Space Agency websites.

"Reading is so critical to the development of a child and his or her ability to relate to the world," said MacLean. "Even at my age, I find the people who read a lot are the people who are the most interesting."

Over the past years, MacLean has volunteered his time to promoting the importance of public libraries and reading. He attributes his passion for space to the sense of adventure that was instilled in him at an early age from the books he read at his local public library.

"Steve's message to children about the importance of reading is at the very heart of our existence," said CLA Executive Director Don Butcher. "We are thrilled to have such a positive role-model for today's youth."

*The Canadian Library Association is a national association, representing those who work in and support Canada's estimated 21,000 libraries. CLA members work in college, university, public, special (corporate, non-profit and government) and school libraries.*