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## NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier

### **B.C. LITERACY CHAMPION HONOURED FOR LIFE'S WORK**

VICTORIA – Premier Gordon Campbell congratulated Joan Acosta today as the recipient of British Columbia's third annual Council of the Federation Literacy Award.

“Literacy helps open doors in people’s lives – whether they’re learning English as a second language or learning to read for the first time as an adult,” Campbell said. “Joan has made a lifelong commitment to improving literacy skills in B.C. and beyond.”

The Council of the Federation, which comprises all 13 provincial and territorial premiers, created the Council of the Federation Literacy Award on the initiative of Premier Campbell. Each province and territory chooses a recipient to receive a Council of the Federation Literacy Award medallion and a certificate signed by the premier of their province or territory.

Over the past 25 years, Acosta has helped raise awareness about issues related to adult literacy and has championed plain language to help make public information accessible to adults with low reading skills.

In 1982, Acosta became the driving force behind the Westcoast Reader, a newspaper for adult literacy and ESL learners in British Columbia. Assuming the roles of researcher, writer, editor and desktop publisher, she later helped others establish similar publications in Seattle and Nova Scotia. Today, Acosta continues to share her expertise in adult literacy through workshops, conferences and visits to classrooms throughout the Lower Mainland.

“Writing and producing materials for literacy-level learners has been my life’s work, and I am honoured to have my efforts recognized by this prestigious award,” said Acosta.

“The Province believes that lifelong learning is one of the keys to a successful life,” said Education Minister Shirley Bond. “Joan Acosta’s exemplary dedication to adult literacy is helping British Columbians reach their full potential and improve their quality of life.”

The first B.C. award was presented in 2005 to the Columbia Basin Alliance for its outstanding achievement in displaying leadership and excellence in literacy. In 2006, the B.C. award was presented to Linda Mitchell in recognition of over 25 years of leadership in literacy-related services. The award supports ReadNow BC, the new provincial literacy action plan, and recognizes the dedication of those who are helping the Province reach its goal of becoming the most educated, literate jurisdiction on the continent.

“I want to thank those who contribute to B.C.’s literacy programs for their tireless efforts to improve literacy skills throughout our province,” said Campbell. “The nominations we received this year speak to the high-quality work that volunteers and professionals are doing every day to help people improve their reading and writing skills.”

This year, 25 B.C. nominations were received for the Council of the Federation Literacy Award. The selection committee considers nominees’ history of commitment to excellence; community and peer recognition; leadership in the promotion of partnerships and public awareness; and the introduction of new ideas in promoting literacy. Nominees have to be B.C. residents for at least two years and consent to their nomination.

Since 2001, government has invested more than \$106 million in new literacy funding, including \$5 million for up to 80 StrongStart BC early learning centres, \$12 million for public libraries, \$10 million for textbooks and \$9.5 million for the kindergarten readiness program Ready, Set, Learn.

For information on the Council of the Federation, visit [www.councilofthefederation.ca](http://www.councilofthefederation.ca).

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