



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Healthy Start / Départ Santé aims to improve diet, exercise for young children

September 30, 2013, SASKATOON – *Healthy Start / Départ Santé*, an initiative to introduce young children to physical activity and healthy eating offered in both English and French, was officially launched today at L'École canadienne-française in Saskatoon.

“Young children today are spending a lot of time in early learning environments, and research has shown that these settings may not be meeting recommended levels of daily physical activity or healthy food,” says lead researcher Anne Leis from the University of Saskatchewan College of Medicine. “Healthy Start / Départ Santé gives educators and cooks the tools and support to include more physical activity and healthy eating in children’s daily lives in ways that are fun and easy to do.”

Children in Saskatchewan rank amongst the highest in obesity rates in the developed world. According to Active Kids Canada, one in four children are not active enough for optimum health.

*Healthy Start / Départ Santé* includes partners in Saskatchewan, Québec and New Brunswick. Initially piloted in 10 childcare centres in Saskatchewan in 2011-12, the initiative will receive \$1.6 million of new funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada for expansion.

The new funding will allow *Healthy Start / Départ Santé* to expand over the next four years to 168 early learning centres and prekindergartens in Saskatchewan as well as childcare centres in New Brunswick. It will serve 3,000 children, 1,200 educators, and more than 6,000 parents, with the aim of increasing physical activity and healthy eating opportunities in the daily routine of 3-to 5-year olds.

*Healthy Start / Départ Santé* is one of 11 projects across Canada whose funding was announced this summer by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Partners are drawn from three U of S Colleges and the Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit, a joint U of S-University of Regina organization. Other partners include the Centre Formation Médicale de Nouveau-Brunswick, the Université de Moncton and the Université de Sherbrooke in Québec. Collaborators include the Association des parents Fransaskois (APF) / Fransaskois Parent Association, Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association and the in motion/en

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mouvement National Network of Researchers and Canadian Communities.

The project is also supported by Saskatchewan provincial funding through the Community Initiatives Fund – Physical Activity Grant.

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