

More than 800 students join Spencer West, Neverest and other special guests to launch Canada-wide We Create Change Tour in St. John's

-- Also announced, Newfoundland and Labrador's Department of Education is partnering with Free The Children to bring We Act, a year-long service learning program, into the province --

-- Photos from today's event can be accessed online at

www.freethechildren.com/wecreatechangetour/press --

St. John's, NL (April 11, 2014) – Today, **The Honourable Clyde Jackman, Minister of Education**, joined more than **800 local students** in welcoming international charity and educational partner [Free The Children](#) to Newfoundland & Labrador to officially launch the [We Create Change Tour](#); an epic ninety stop, ten week road trip across Canada presented by RBC and driven by Ford Motor Company of Canada, Ltd.

Featuring Me to We motivational speaker, author and Free The Children Ambassador, **Spencer West**, along with friends from chart-topping, MMVA nominated Canadian group, **Neverest**, and 11-year-old activist **Hannah Alper**, this **first of its kind cross-Canada road trip** will run from April 11 – June 17, connecting directly with **tens of thousands** of young Canadians to celebrate the incredible actions they have taken to provide their peers overseas in developing communities with access to education. Akin to a 'mini [We Day](#)', today students from across Newfoundland & Labrador, both in person and watching through a live webstream, took part to launch the We Create Change Tour event. Students heard inspiring speeches from **Free The Children co-founder Marc Kielburger, Education Minister Clyde Jackman** and headliner **Spencer West**, as well as incredible stories of local change-makers and musical performances from **Neverest**. Participants also heard firsthand accounts of community change from local students in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Minister Jackman also announced the launch of a new partnership between Free the Children and the Provincial Government which will see [We Act](#), Free The Children's year-long service learning program, offered at schools throughout the province. Building on the success of the province's Safe and Caring Schools policy, We Act will strengthen the continued commitment of building caring and empathetic communities throughout the province. Schools across the province are taking action on the local and global causes they are passionate about, like St. Peter's Junior High who have put on many fundraising events to support local homeless shelters through collections for food hampers and personal care items or Reagan MacLean, a student from St. Paul's Intermediate School, who took a stand against bullying in her school community through helping to organize a Pink Shirt Day at her school.

"Students and educators in this province have a strong commitment to their communities and are passionate about making a difference for their family, friends and neighbours," said Minister Jackman. "But they are also dedicated to helping the less fortunate of the world. We are pleased to be partnering with Free The Children's We Act program, to inspire our students to take that dedication even further by joining a community of like-minded youth across Canada. I know our schools will make a tremendous contribution to the province, the country, and the world through We Act, and I look forward to seeing them in action."

The We Act program supports students and teachers with free educational resources, student-led campaigns and action planning materials, providing tangible steps to take action on the local and global issues young people care about most. The program enhances a school's existing social justice initiatives

and is often used to spark new opportunities for community service. As part of the We Act program, schools commit to taking action on at least one local and one global initiative of their choice during the school year. Since 2007, youth involved in We Act have achieved remarkable results, logging 9.6 million volunteer hours and have raised \$37 million for more than 1,000 local and global causes.

“We hope to help students here in Newfoundland and Labrador take action on the causes they care about and become part of a global movement of young change-makers. Whether it’s helping a neighbour down the street, or opening the doors to education for a child halfway around the world, we know students here want to make a difference,” said Marc Kielburger, co-founder of Free The Children. “That’s why we are thrilled to kick-off our We Create Change Tour in St. John’s, and take this opportunity to celebrate the generosity and spirit of volunteerism that resonates throughout the province.”

Lead by Spencer West, the We Create Change Tour will connect with tens of thousands of young Canadians from St. John’s to Vancouver, who are taking action at home to ensure their peers overseas have an opportunity to go to school.

Told that he would never be a functioning member of society, after losing both his legs at the age of five, West strives to redefine what is possible and inspires millions of people with powerful stories of overcoming challenges. Last year West helped inspire Canadians to raise over \$1.4 million through Free The Children’s [We Create Change](#) campaign with an 11 day, 300 km walk from Edmonton to Calgary – which he did on his hands and in his wheelchair – raising enough funds to provide clean water for life to more than 56,000 people. In 2012, West reached the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro, garnering international media attention and raising more than half a million dollars in support of clean water.

Throughout the school year students across Canada have supported [Free The Children’s Year of Education initiative](#) – a commitment to build 200 schools and school rooms for children overseas, to provide them with an education that will help break the cycle of poverty. From bake sales and school dances, and participating in a Canada-wide coin drive called [We Create Change](#), a joint initiative of Free The Children and RBC, young Canadians have been hard at work shining a light on the issue of equal access to education and fundraising to build schools and school rooms overseas.

Learn more about how students, schools and individual Canadians can support Free The Children’s Year of Education initiative, or to stay connected with the We Create Change Tour:

#ChangeTour

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Follow Spencer on Twitter [@spencer2thewest](#)

www.freethechildren.com/wecreatechangetour

Footage and high resolution photos of participating students, Spencer West, Hannah Alper, Neverest and other supporters, the tour bus and the 2014 Ford Escape specially modified for Spencer, etc. can be downloaded in the Electronic Press Kit: www.freethechildren.com/wecreatechangetour/press.

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About Free The Children

Free The Children is an international charity and educational partner. Founded in 1995 by international activist Craig Kielburger, Free The Children believes in a world where young people are free to achieve their fullest potential, and empowers youth to remove barriers that prevent them from being active local and global citizens. The organization's domestic programs – which include We Day, Free The Children's signature youth empowerment event – educate, engage and empower 2.3 million youth across North America and UK become engaged global citizens. Its international projects are implemented through a holistic and sustainable development model called Adopt a Village. Currently, Adopt a Village supports community development in eight countries; Kenya, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Ecuador, Haiti, Nicaragua, rural China and India. Through its international programming, Free The Children has brought more than 650 schools and school rooms to youth and provided clean water, health care and sanitation to 1 million people around the world, freeing children and their families from the cycle of poverty.

The organization has received the World's Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child, the Human Rights Award from the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations, and has formed successful partnerships with leading school boards and Oprah's Angel Network. For more information, visit www.freethechildren.com.

For more information, please contact:

Julia Thomas
Associate Director, PR & Publicity
Free The Children
416-738-8702
Julia.Thomas@freethechildren.com

Heather May
Director of Communications
Department of Education
709-729-0048, 697-5061
heathermay@gov.nl.ca