

For Immediate Release
2009FOR0074-000597
November 10, 2009

Ministry of Forests and Range
Natural Resources Canada

CANADIAN WOOD REBUILDS SCHOOL DESTROYED BY EARTHQUAKE

DUJIANGYAN, CHINA – Federal and provincial officials today unveiled a plaque commemorating the opening of Xiang’e Primary School in China’s Sichuan Province.

The event celebrated Canada and B.C.’s contributions to building a new school for hundreds of children in one of the areas hardest hit by the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake. Xiang’e Primary is one of three buildings funded under the \$8-million Canada-British Columbia Wenchuan Earthquake Reconstruction Project.

“Today’s event is the realization of Canada’s commitment to help the people of China restore their community facilities destroyed by the Wenchuan earthquake,” said the Honourable Lisa Raitt, Canada’s Minister of Natural Resources. “This school demonstrates that Canadian wood-frame construction can meet China’s requirements for buildings that provide stability in earthquake-prone areas.”

“This commemorative plaque marks the completion of an important humanitarian effort that also generated a tremendous amount of exposure for the benefits of wood-frame construction,” said Bell. “For generations to come, this plaque will also remind students and teachers of the enduring bond of friendship that began with the rebuilding of this unique school.”

The 5,749-square-metre complex recently received fire safety approval from Chinese authorities, setting a new precedent for multi-storey, multi-use wood frame buildings.

The Canada-British Columbia Wenchuan Earthquake Reconstruction Project was announced in June 2008 as a joint initiative funded by the Province of British Columbia and the federal government. The initiative was created to help earthquake-devastated Sichuan communities rebuild with Canadian wood-frame technology and wood products. Other reconstruction projects under this initiative include a Special School for the Disabled in Mianyang and an Elderly Care Centre in Beichuan.

Construction of the school was a collaborative effort between Canadian officials from Forestry Innovation Investment, the B.C. government’s international marketing agency for forest products; the Canada Wood Group, an industry marketing association; and Chinese officials from Tongji University and Shanghai Municipal Reconstruction.

The school complex includes classrooms, dormitories and a cafeteria and houses up to 540 students. Wood framing and wood panels were used to create the ceilings, along with the interior and exterior walls. Wood was also used in the exterior landscaping for bench seating and the principal archway into the school grounds.

Photos of the rebuilt school and plaque commemoration will be available online in the Ministry of Forests and Range media room at www.for.gov.bc.ca/pab/media/.

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