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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Let's Talk Science receives boost from NSERC's PromoScience Program

Three-year investment allows young Canadians to participate in out-of-this-world experience

London, Ontario – March 18, 2015 – Today, the Honourable Ed Holder, Minister of State (Science and Technology), announced a three-year, \$102,000 investment in Let's Talk Science to support the award-winning Tomatosphere™ program. Let's Talk Science is a national charitable organization focused on education and outreach to support youth development. The funding comes from the federal government's Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council's (NSERC) PromoScience Program that invests in organizations inspiring young Canadians to study science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

"We are thrilled the federal government is investing in the Tomatosphere™ program, which aims to engage and inspire young minds, encouraging youth to stick with science, technology, engineering and math and keep doors open for their futures," said Bonnie Schmidt, President and Founder of Let's Talk Science. "With this funding, we will bring Tomatosphere™, a free program, to additional communities across Canada and continue to support youth development, strengthen learning and support educators."

NSERC's PromoScience program supports hands-on learning experiences for young students and their teachers. Tomatosphere™ uses the excitement of space exploration as a context for teaching students the skills and processes of scientific experimentation and inquiry. Each year, thousands of Kindergarten to Grade 12 classrooms across Canada plant two sets of tomato seeds to investigate the effects of the space environment on the growth of food. One set of tomato seeds has been sent into space or treated in space-simulated conditions while the other set contains regular seeds. The results from students' two tomato plants help Canadian scientists understand issues associated with growing food in space that will inevitably support long-term human space travel.

"Our research has found that 70 per cent of Canada's top jobs require science, technology, engineering and math education, and this number will only continue to grow," added Dr. Schmidt. "Early exposure and involvement with hands-on science, technology, engineering and math programs like Tomatosphere™ will propel more youth to pursue education and career choices that will help them succeed in the technology-based economy of the 21st century."

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About Let's Talk Science:

Let's Talk Science is an award-winning, national, charitable outreach organization that creates and delivers unique learning programs and services that engage children, youth and educators in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The organization strives to prepare youth for their future careers and role as citizens in a rapidly changing world. For more information about Let's Talk Science, please visit www.letstalkscience.ca.

Let's Talk Science has been operating Tomatosphere™ in Canada since July 2014 and is now part of the Tomatosphere™ consortium. Other consortium members include the Canadian Space Agency (CSA), Heinz Canada Ltd, HeinzSeed, Stokes Seeds, the University of Guelph, and First the Seed Foundation. The Tomatosphere™ program was developed in 2001. In 2013, Tomatosphere™ won the 2012 NSERC Award for Science Promotion. For more information about Tomatosphere™, please visit www.tomatosphere.org.