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### **GOVERNMENT OF CANADA FUNDS CUTTING EDGE SMART BOARD TECHNOLOGY AT UWI's GEOLOGY MUSEUM**

The University of the West Indies Geology Museum (UWIGM) will open an Interactive Learning Centre at the Department of Geography and Geology, University of the West Indies, Mona, on March 11, 2010. The SMART Board Technology will allow students of all ages to engage in hands-on computer technology as they touch, play and learn.

The project was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency's Canada Fund for Local Initiatives to the sum of \$9,993.00 Canadian dollars, with additional funding provided by the Jamaican Geographical Society and the Department of Geography and Geology.

The purpose of the project is to upgrade the facilities of the UWIGM to meet international standards especially in the care of collections, and in the delivery of museum education programmes. The project aims to achieve the following:

1. Generate multimedia exhibits for interactive learning.
2. Improve and upgrade exhibition and display mechanisms for effective teaching and learning about Jamaican Geology from both the collections and interactive learning programmes.
3. Provide professional development opportunities for teachers and teachers in training through short courses and resource material.

(more)

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The objective of the museum is to establish a reference and display collection of rocks, minerals, fossils, and information that explains the geology of Jamaica, and its relevance to the past and future economic, scientific and cultural development of the country.

The Government of Canada's contribution has brought the museum education and outreach programme into the 21st century. This will allow persons to learn about Jamaica's geology, as well as, obtain tutorials and learning information globally. The interactive learning centre and refurbished exhibition hall will provide children and teachers with valuable information to supplement the Grade 4 curriculum for which they have little or no resources or information. Students at the secondary and tertiary level can visit the museum and access information by using the interactive software

Dr. Sherene James-Williamson, Museum Curator, said that the project should improve career development as the jobs of a geologist and museum curator are not popular career choices for Jamaicans. "It is hoped that children will see the link with scientific careers and leap towards it." She noted that science has become a very unpopular career choice and trust that these visits will encourage shifts towards science as a career. "I hope that young girls will be able to interact and observe the work of female geologists, and may be inclined to think of geology as a career, as this is usually dominated by men." She said.

Canada's High Commissioner to Jamaica, His Excellency Stephen Hallihan in his remarks, said that Canada Fund is very pleased to be associated with the centre. "It is very much the type of project that we love supporting. It is an imaginative and innovative project, which will achieve an impact far beyond its cost." He added that, "interactive museums designed around young children are fun and the idea that learning can be fun is now mainstreamed into education systems the world over. This acceptance of 'play' has brought about new innovations in learning, drawing on the latest computer technologies, such as the 'SMART-BOARD', which enhance children's awareness, knowledge and generally, the use of computers themselves are essential foundations for today's world."

The University of the West Indies Geology Museum was established in 1961 and is the only museum of its kind in the English-speaking Caribbean. It is situated on the ground floor of the De la Beche Building of the Department of Geography and Geology at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus. The museum is accessible to researchers, students (from early childhood to tertiary level), and to the general public.