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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**ATTENTION: News/Science/Education/Family Section Reporters**

**H.R. MACMILLAN SPACE CENTRE OFFERS THE LATEST DIRT ON MARS**  
**NASA link and Phoenix Lander display provide timely educational opportunity**

**Vancouver, BC, June 24, 2008** – Winter is coming sooner than you think -- on Mars. As NASA counts down to completion of its Phoenix mission before the arrival of the Martian winter, the H.R. MacMillan Space Centre launches today its own effort to educate visitors about this historical event with the latest multi-media updates from NASA and a Phoenix Lander display.

The Hubble Space View will be broadcast on monitors outside the Planetarium theatre and near the Space Centre's Phoenix Lander display, providing the most current images from NASA, latest events and discoveries.

"It's the first place you'll see images of Mars from NASA," said Cam Cronin, Space Centre public programmer.

In addition to the NASA link, the Space Centre is regularly updating its multi-media Phoenix Lander display. Space Centre staff will be on hand daily to answer questions between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.

According to Cronin, the rush is on to get the latest dirt on Mars as Phoenix digs up soil samples to determine if life indeed exists on the Red Planet. "Phoenix has to work quickly before winter arrives and the ground freezes. In a couple of months, Phoenix will be encased in a block of ice," added Cronin.

For more information about this and all Space Centre programs, call 604-738-7827 or visit [www.spacecentre.ca](http://www.spacecentre.ca).

**PHOENIX AND MARS FACTS:**

- Mars is much colder than Earth. Temperatures at the Martian surface vary from as low as about -125 degrees C (-195 degrees F) near the poles during the winter to as much as 20 degrees C (70 degrees F) at midday near the equator. The average temperature on Mars is about -60 degrees C (-80 degrees F). Source: NASA website
- The Phoenix Lander is approximately 350 kilograms or the same size as an average cow. It's as tall as a full grown male Kangaroo and as long as a King Cobra snake.
- Phoenix landed in Mars' northern region, the water-ice-rich northern polar region which has been nicknamed Wonderland.
- Phoenix will have traveled 680 million kilometres or the same as going around the earth 5337 times.

- Phoenix landed on May 25 -- known as Nerd Pride Day after the first release of Star Wars on May 25, 1977.

The H.R. MacMillan Space Centre is a non-profit community resource that brings the wonders of space to Earth, while providing a personal sense of ongoing discovery. Through innovative programming, exhibits and activities, our goal is to inspire sustained interest in the fields of Earth science, space science and astronomy from a Canadian perspective.

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