### Bob Thirsk Commented on the Tomatosphere Program for the Student

Jim Wilkes science reporter March 27, 2001

TORONTO- In the last month ,many students across Canada were cultivating tomato seeds from space. Yesterday ,Canadian astronaut Bob Thirsk visited St. Cecillia Catholic School to check their experiments and he thought this was a nice program for scientific educations.

The Tomatosphere project involves 2,500 secondary school classrooms across Canada growing 400,000 seeds, half of which made the trip to space. “The space-flown seeds made 170 orbit of the Earth, travelled more than 7 million kilometers and spent 12 days weightless,” Thirsk said, who flew aboard the shuttle Columbia on a 17 days mission in 1996.

In the cult movie classic Attack of the Killer Tomatoes, mutant vegetables cut a deadly swath through the community, consuming every one in their path. “There should be no fear on the part of teachers or parents about any toxic fruit growing from these tomato plants, ”said Thrisk. He said he would eat tomatoes produced from the high-flying seeds or use them to make salad or ketchup .

At the end of June, schools will send result of their experiment to the Canadian Space Agency which will compile the data and make conclusions .

Thirsk said the program is designed to introduce space science to young Canadians. “I can see that in these classrooms we have potential future Canadian scientists and astronauts ,” he said . “I find that incredibly exciting.”