

**National Nursing Week**  
**Minister of Health George Abbott**  
**May 10**

*Check Against Delivery*

It is great to be here this morning to celebrate National Nursing Week in B.C. Every nurse plays a vital role in keeping the province healthy and National Nursing Week is an opportunity to celebrate the profession.

National Nursing Week is from May 8 – 14. This year's theme 'Nursing: Promoting Healthy Choices for Healthy Living' highlights nurses' contribution to public health and primary health care.

Nursing Week is one week in which to recognize the work nurses do 52 weeks of the year. In fact, just last week, members of the BC Nursing Union – more than 29,000 registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses – ratified their agreement. This innovative contract should help us recruit, retain and educate more nurses to improve B.C.'s health care.

By working together to improve and modern the health system, we will create systems that benefit our patients. The agreement sets out steps to improve health-care service delivery, such as:

- Financial encouragement for nurses to work nights and weekends;
- Initiatives to attract nurses to work in difficult to fill positions; as well as
- Allowing employers and government to work closely with nurses on workload issues.

We are committed to working with all nurses in British Columbia. B.C. has almost 40,000 nurses – registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses and licensed practical nurses. That is why we have continued to invest in BC's nursing strategy. This is in addition to the increased compensation and benefits.

Today, I am pleased to announce additional funding for the BC Nursing Strategy. Since 2001, this government has invested \$120 million in the BC Nursing Strategy to educate, recruit and retain nurses. This year, government is investing an additional \$26 million. This brings the total investment in the BC Nursing Strategy to \$146 million.

This year's investment of \$26 million provides:

- Education and support for front line unit managers;
- Expanded undergraduate nursing program to support student nurses on work terms;
- Support to increase our number of Aboriginal nursing students and graduates in B.C.; and
- Ongoing integration of nurse practitioners into the health system.

Our strategy is paying off. Since December 2001, more than 900 nurses have been funded through the Return to Nursing initiative. More than 1,000 Licensed Practical Nurses received funding through the LPN Upgrade Program. And B.C.'s first group of nurse practitioners graduated in May 2005.

The Ministry of Health has worked with the Ministry of Advanced Education to expand the number of nursing seats by 62%, with 2,511 new nursing seats since 2001. Graduating more nurses will support the improvement, modernization and transformation of our health system.

National Nursing Week is an appropriate time to thank all B.C. nurses for their contribution in making British Columbia the healthiest province in Canada.

National Nursing Week was proclaimed in 1985 to take place in the second week of May to coincide with Florence Nightingale's birthday on May 12. Florence Nightingale was a pioneer of modern nursing. She was also a noted statistician. Her most famous contribution came during the Crimean War in Europe during the 18th century where she came to be known as The Lady with the Lamp.

There is also an opera inspired by her story. Florence: The Lady with the Lamp is being performed this weekend in Vancouver by the UBC Opera Ensemble. Two singers from the ensemble are with us today to perform excerpts.

I would like to introduce Dionne Sellinger who plays Florence Nightingale, Andrew Stewart who plays John Smithurst and pianist David Boothroyd who will give a quick introduction about the story, and will answer questions after the event.

Thank you