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## FOR THE RECORD

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Ministry of Health

### **WORLD AIDS DAY – RAISING AWARENESS IN B.C.**

VICTORIA – December 1 is World AIDS Day, with events taking place across British Columbia to mark the day. World AIDS Day acknowledges people living with HIV in B.C. and around the world, and also recognizes organizations and volunteers that work to help in the fight against AIDS.

- In British Columbia, up to 12,000 people are living with HIV or AIDS.
- The Province's strategy for HIV/AIDS focuses on prevention, increasing treatment, improving capacity, and increasing collaboration between health authorities, provincial agencies, community organizations and federal authorities.
- B.C. provides over \$100 million each year to fight HIV.
- On a per capita basis, the Province funds one of the most robust responses to HIV in Canada.
- Trends are improving in British Columbia:
  - Fewer British Columbians are testing positive for HIV. There were 410 newly reported cases in 2005, compared to 442 in 2004.
  - More HIV patients in B.C. are accessing anti-retroviral treatment. The proportion of B.C.'s HIV population on HAART (Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy) in 2005 was approximately 38 per cent, up from 30 per cent in 2001 and surpassing 2005's target of 35 per cent.
  - More British Columbians are being tested for HIV. From May 2003 to April 2004, 145,873 people were tested. That number increased by 4.5 per cent (6,567) from May 2004 to April 2005, when 152,440 people were tested.
- The ministry, through PHSA, provides \$2.8 million in annual operating funds for the Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS – a world leader in research and treatment.
- At the 2006 International Conference on HIV/AIDS, Dr. Julio Montaner of the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS received worldwide acclaim after presenting research proposing how to radically reduce HIV infections through a strategic expansion of antiretroviral treatment.
- Every person living with HIV/AIDS in the province can access anti-retroviral drug treatment at no cost through the BC Centre for Excellence.
- The provincial government supports the Dr. Peter Centre in Vancouver which provides 24-hour residential care and other supports for people living with HIV/AIDS.
- In both 2005/06 and 2006/07 the Ministry of Health provided health authorities with \$1.25 million to intensify HIV contact tracing and partner notification efforts.

- B.C. made HIV a reportable disease in 2003. Public health follow-up on newly reported infections will help to prevent potential HIV infections.
- Vancouver Coastal Health operates North America's first supervised injection site, which research shows is reducing the risks of transmitting HIV.

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