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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

### **HEALTH AUTHORITIES TO GET \$25M TO REDUCE WAIT TIMES**

VANCOUVER – Patients in British Columbia will benefit from hundreds more elective hip and knee surgeries, as well as other diagnostic and surgical procedures, with an additional \$25 million being made available to the province’s health authorities, announced Health Minister George Abbott today.

“With this additional funding, on top of new funding we announced last spring, the health authorities are projecting we will achieve a milestone of over 10,000 hip and knee surgeries this year – for the first time ever in British Columbia,” said Abbott. “This is part of our commitment to ensure patients get the care they need faster, whether waiting for a joint replacement or a diagnostic procedure as part of that surgery.”

The additional \$25 million will be made available to British Columbia’s health authorities in 2006/07 for the following purposes:

- \$12.5 million to provide for an allocation of more than 850 hip and knee joint replacement surgeries;
- \$7.5 million to address wait time priorities including diagnostic and surgical procedures such as cataract and cardiac; and
- \$5 million to improve health system response to increased demands on critical care facilities.

The \$7.5-million and \$5-million funding envelopes will be provided based on proposals from health authorities that will be assessed on the basis of surgical capacity, demand and innovation. The \$12.5-million funding envelope will be allocated based on the Ministry of Health’s existing population needs based funding formula.

In February 2006, Premier Gordon Campbell announced a \$60.5-million investment to manage and help reduce wait times throughout the province. Part of this funding went toward the creation of a new Centre for Surgical Innovation at UBC Hospital, with dedicated operating rooms to help reduce patient backlogs for hip and knee surgery.

The most recent data for October 2006 from the Ministry of Health’s wait time website shows that median wait times for hip and knee replacement surgeries are dropping. Hip surgery wait times are down from 19.6 weeks in 2001/02 to 17.9 weeks as of October 2006, and knee surgery wait times are down from 25.3 weeks in 2001/02 to 22 weeks in October 2006.

About half of all surgeries in B.C. are performed as emergency or urgent and are never waitlisted. The Province’s surgical wait times website, which provides information and regional statistics for British Columbians waiting for elective surgery, is at [www.health.gov.bc.ca](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca).

To provide comments and suggestions on B.C.'s health system, British Columbians are invited to join the Conversation on Health at [www.bcconversationonhealth.ca](http://www.bcconversationonhealth.ca).

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