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## NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier  
Ministry of Health

### **BRITISH COLUMBIANS TO HELP SHAPE FUTURE OF HEALTH Sustaining our Public Health System for Today and Tomorrow**

VANCOUVER – Premier Gordon Campbell today called on all British Columbians to take an active role in helping to shape the future of the health system by joining the Conversation on Health. These historic provincewide conversations will ensure that, within the framework of the Canada Health Act, needed programs and services are there for generations to come.

“All British Columbians value the importance and quality of our health system. As we promised in the throne speech this February, the Conversation will ensure government hears what our citizens consider crucial today and for the future of health in B.C.,” said the Premier. “We encourage people to join the Conversation so they can tell us their ideas, what the pressures are and what improvements can be made to our health system.”

Over the next year, British Columbians will be able to provide input into the Conversation on Health in a number of ways:

- regional forums
- e-mail – [ConversationonHealth@Victoria1.gov.bc.ca](mailto:ConversationonHealth@Victoria1.gov.bc.ca)
- letter – Ministry of Health, 5-3, 1515 Blanshard St., Victoria, B. C. V8W 3C8
- on the web – [www.BCConversationonHealth.ca](http://www.BCConversationonHealth.ca)
- contacting MLAs, or
- calling the toll-free Conversation on Health line at 1-866-884-2055 (translation in 130 languages available), Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

This fall, front line health-care workers, administrators, associations, other organizations, First Nations groups and academics will discuss their views during the process. Regional forums for the public in each of the 16 health service delivery areas will start in early November and end next summer. Funding will be provided to help offset the costs of travel for people who need assistance.

“More people are moving to the province and our population is aging. Couple this with tremendous yet costly advances in surgical procedures, diagnostic technology and pharmaceutical therapies, and we have very different pressures on our health system today than we had even a decade ago,” said Campbell. “In this dynamic environment, we need to ensure that our health programs are responsive to the needs of our citizens today and tomorrow.”

The health budget represents 42 percent of the Province’s annual budget. If the health budget continues to grow as it has in the past, it could consume over 70 percent of the total provincial budget by 2017. This could squeeze out necessary funding for other critical government services such as education, highways and social services.

A provincial congress on health will be held on Oct. 10. MLAs, MPs, mayors of major municipalities and First Nations leaders will have a chance to participate. Their input will be forwarded to the Conversation on Health project.

The input received from the Conversation will lay the groundwork for improvements that will be presented to the Province in fall 2007. The Province's goal is to strengthen the five principles of the Canada Health Act – universality, accessibility, comprehensiveness, portability and public administration. The results of the Conversation will also be used to develop a sixth principle, sustainability, which will ensure B.C.'s health programs and services are available in the future. This principle and the five Canada Health Act principles are expected to be enshrined in provincial legislation.

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4 backgrounder(s) attached.

Media contact: Marisa Adair  
Communications Director  
Ministry of Health  
250 920-8500 (cell)  
250 952-1887

Dale Steeves  
Director of Communications  
Office of the Premier  
250 361-7783

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