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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health  
Ministry of Advanced Education

### **PROVINCE INVESTS \$28 MILLION TO FUND MORE NURSES**

VICTORIA – The Province is doing its part to celebrate National Nursing Week 2007 with a \$28-million investment in B.C.’s Nursing Strategy to help increase the number of practising nurses in British Columbia, Health Minister George Abbott announced today.

“The global competition for nurses requires British Columbia to have a comprehensive and aggressive strategy to attract and retain nurses – and that’s what B.C.’s Nursing Strategy provides us,” said Abbott, speaking at an event at the legislature with some of British Columbia’s practising nurses. “With this latest investment, our government has now provided B.C.’s Nursing Strategy with a total of \$174 million since 2001 to help educate, retain and recruit the best qualified nurses in British Columbia.”

As a result of government’s investment in the B.C. Nursing Strategy, \$50 million has been funded to front-line leadership positions and training and an additional \$30 million has been committed to specialty and continuing education programs. These investments have led to over 1,200 nurses being supported through various education upgrades and 1,100 nurses re-educated through the Return to Nursing Program.

In addition, British Columbia’s first group of nurse practitioners graduated in May of 2005 and hold key positions on primary health-care teams. Today, 51 Nurse Practitioners are working in rural and urban settings across the province.

The B.C. Nursing Strategy was launched in 2001 and focuses on recruitment, retention and education. B.C.’s Nursing Strategy applies to registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, licensed practical nurses and nurse practitioners.

“Today, British Columbia is seeing more nursing graduates than ever before because there are more training spaces than ever before. Next year alone we are adding 326 new nursing education spaces,” said Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell. “In the past six years, we have made tremendous progress in expanding nursing education across British Columbia as 20 new nursing programs have been created at public post-secondary institutions.”

Since 2001, government has added 3,347 nursing education spaces throughout British Columbia – an increase of 82 per cent. The increase in nursing education spaces has led to the graduation of over 7,500 new nurses in the past five years – including 4,909 registered nurses, 2,286 practical licensed nurses and 344 registered psychiatric nurses.

“The contributions our nurses make to the Vancouver Island health system are truly invaluable,” said Dr. Lynn Stevenson, chief of professional practice and nursing for the Vancouver Island Health Authority. “National Nursing Week is always a great opportunity to recognize the over 39,000 practising nurses in British Columbia who work tirelessly every day to provide patients with the best available care.”

National Nursing Week 2007, May 7 to 13, celebrates the variety of contributions both the nursing profession and nurses make to the health system. This year’s theme is “Think You Know Nursing? Take a Closer Look.”

In 1985, the second week of May was proclaimed National Nursing Week in Canada to coincide with Florence Nightingale’s birthday on May 12. The International Council of Nurses also designated May 12 as International Nurses Day.

The Ministry of Health is committed to working with the Ministry of Advanced Education to allocate more seats to nursing and other health-care programs to meet the needs of British Columbia patients.

The B.C. Nursing Strategy investment is part of government’s Pacific Leadership Agenda to improve the health of citizens and to renew the public health system.

For more information on the Conversation on Health, please visit [www.bcconversationonhealth.ca](http://www.bcconversationonhealth.ca) online.

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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