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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

### **ADDITIONAL \$26M INVESTED IN B.C.'S NURSING STRATEGY**

VICTORIA – British Columbia's 40,000 nurses play a vital role in keeping the province healthy and National Nursing Week is an opportunity to celebrate the profession, said Health Minister George Abbott as he announced additional funding for the BC Nursing Strategy.

“Since 2001, this government has invested \$120 million to educate, recruit and retain nurses, and this year, government is investing an additional \$26 million in the BC Nursing Strategy,” Abbott said. “This government has increased the number of nursing seats by 62 per cent to more than 2,500 additional spaces as part of our commitment to educate, recruit and retain more nurses. Graduating more nurses will support the improvement, modernization and transformation of our health system.”

This year's investment of \$26 million in the BC Nursing Strategy provides education and support for front-line unit managers, an expanded undergraduate nursing program to support student nurses on work terms, support to increase the number of Aboriginal nursing students and graduates in B.C. and ongoing integration of nurse practitioners into the health system. This funding does not include compensation or support for policy discussion initiatives that have been determined through negotiations.

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

Since December 2001, more than 900 nurses have been funded through the Return to Nursing initiative. Also, more than 1,000 Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) received funding through the LPN Upgrade Program and B.C.'s first group of nurse practitioners graduated in May of 2005. The Ministry of Advanced Education has added 20 new nursing programs across the province and created thousands of new spaces for nursing students.

“The government's focus on education means that British Columbians will continue to receive top quality nursing services well into the future,” said Dr. Sally Thorne, director of UBC's School of Nursing. “Introducing new programs and opportunities, like nurse practitioners who can diagnose common conditions, prescribe medications, refer to physicians and order lab tests, gives nurses and patients the best options for service.”

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.

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