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## NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier  
Ministry of Health  
Providence Health Care

### **Leading the way in the fight against AIDS**

VANCOUVER – An AIDS-free B.C. is in sight, as Premier Christy Clark along with UN under-secretary and executive director for UNAIDS, Michel Sidibé, and Dr. Julio Montaner, director for the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, and Health Minister Terry Lake announced that ward 10C at St. Paul’s Hospital will no longer be used as a dedicated AIDS ward.

“This is a proud day for British Columbians as we mark another milestone in our leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS,” said Premier Clark. “Thanks to the dedicated efforts of the community, those at the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS and health professionals across the province, a ward that once served those dying from AIDS, now supports those living with HIV.”

Ward 10C at St. Paul’s Hospital in downtown Vancouver was originally opened as an AIDS ward in February 1997 during the peak of the HIV and AIDS epidemic in the city, when approximately one person was dying of AIDS every day. Earlier diagnosis of HIV, along with advances in treatment and care, has resulted in a significant decrease of AIDS. Patients living with HIV will continue to receive world-leading treatment and care. The focus of the ward will include treatment related to addictions such as various bacterial and viral infections like chronic hepatitis.

“British Columbia’s dedication to the fight against HIV/AIDS has meant that we have reduced AIDS cases in Vancouver by over 80% since 1996,” said Lake. “With continued focus on providing care, treatment and support for those living with HIV and related diseases, more British Columbians will live longer, healthier lives.”

“There was a time when there weren’t enough beds to care for the numbers of people living with HIV,” said Sidibé. “The pioneering work of Dr. Montaner and the leadership of British Columbia have helped to ensure that people living with HIV live longer, healthier lives and as a result HIV clinics are starting to close. This is an important milestone towards ending the AIDS epidemic,” he added. UNAIDS also announced that Montaner has agreed to serve as senior advisor on HIV to the executive director of UNAIDS.

British Columbia is recognized as a world-leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS, with innovative programs that have reduced HIV/AIDS-related deaths by greater than 80% since 1996. British Columbia has taken an aggressive approach to addressing the HIV epidemic through programs such as the Seek and Treat for Optimal Prevention of HIV/AIDS (STOP HIV/AIDS) pilot. Beginning last year, the B.C. Government provided \$19.9 million in annual funding to expand this program across the province. The BC Centre for Excellence’s Treatment as Prevention strategy has been adopted by France, Brazil, Panama, China, UNAIDS and in cities in the United

States.

“It was not that long ago that HIV/AIDS was a death sentence and those who came to this ward at St. Paul’s were here to die,” said Dr. Montaner. “Today, ward 10C will provide treatment, support and care for those living with HIV-related issues. We have worked hard to make this day happen and I commend everyone who has supported our efforts.”

St. Paul’s Hospital is an acute care teaching and research hospital in the heart of downtown Vancouver. It is home to many world-class medical and research programs including the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS, which is dedicated to improving the health of British Columbians with HIV.

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