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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

### **ACCESS TO HEALTH PROFESSIONALS EXPANDED**

VICTORIA – Following through on commitments made in the throne speech, Health Minister George Abbott today introduced the Health Professions Regulatory Reform Act. The legislation will expand patient access to and choice of health professionals, while making British Columbia the most attractive and welcoming place in Canada for health professionals to work.

“British Columbians were very clear in the Conversation on Health they wanted greater access to health-care professionals to help prevent and manage chronic diseases, and ensure acute care professionals are there when needed,” said Abbott. “The Health Professions Regulatory Reform Act will enhance the scopes of practice of existing health-care professionals, welcome new health-care professionals to our province, and welcome back Canadians who left for training or work in other countries.”

The act will enable qualified physicians working in other provinces and countries to practise in British Columbia with a restricted licence in their specific areas of qualification. Pharmacists will be permitted to authorize routine prescription renewals. Nurses will have an enhanced scope of practice. Canadian citizens who trained in medical schools or work outside Canada will be welcomed home with opportunities to practise in British Columbia.

“This government is moving forward on the subject of immigration doctor integration, and AIMD BC is very encouraged by the co-operation we have received from the Ministry of Health,” said Dr. Carla Fast, president of the Association of International Medical Doctors of B.C.

A new Health Professions Review Board will be empowered to review college decisions in individual cases of registration refusal or complaints about registrants so as to ensure that all qualified health workers can fully and appropriately utilize their training and skills, and not be denied that right by unnecessary credentialing and licensure restrictions. New advisory panels can be established to provide advice and recommendations to the health minister on system-wide issues such as entry-to-practice requirements and scope of practice expansion requests or disputes.

“These two new bodies will improve the accountability of health profession colleges to professionals wanting to work in British Columbia and to the public who want greater access to health professionals in their communities,” said Abbott.

The Health Professions Regulatory Reform Act will also enhance the transparency of health profession colleges, particularly in relation to their disciplinary proceedings. All colleges will now be required to publicly post the outcome of disciplinary hearings that result in actions against health professionals. In addition, they will be required to notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation.

“We are responding to British Columbians who called for more transparency of health profession colleges, and especially their members who may have been found to have acted inappropriately,” said Abbott. “Health profession colleges will be also be required to fund the costs of counselling programs for victims of professional misconduct by a member of their college.”

British Columbia is already at the forefront of Canadian health profession regulatory reform, along with Alberta and Ontario. With these latest innovations, British Columbia will maintain its position as a Canadian leader in regulating health professions.

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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