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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

### **Vancouver Drug Court celebrates 10 years of success**

VANCOUVER – As the Drug Treatment Court of Vancouver (DTCV) marks a decade since it embarked on an innovative approach to dealing with drug-addicted offenders, a recent study shows the drug court is having significant success in reducing reoffending.

Simon Fraser University conducted an independent evaluation of the drug court's alternative process for individuals who commit offences because they have a drug addiction. The study determined the DTCV reduced drug-related recidivism by 56 per cent over a two-year tracking period. It also determined that DTCV involvement decreases criminal offending of all kinds by 35 per cent.

In the 10 years since the court opened in December 2001, 196 offenders who had substance use disorders and were before the courts were redirected from the regular criminal justice system into treatment programs to address their addictions.

The DTCV is designed for individuals charged with offences motivated by drug addiction. People charged under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act or the Criminal Code of Canada, and whose offences were motivated by addiction when they committed their crimes, are potentially eligible for DTCV.

#### **Quotes:**

#### **Minister of Public Safety, Solicitor General and Attorney General Shirley Bond –**

“As the Drug Treatment Court of Vancouver turns 10, it's encouraging to know that its team approach – which includes courts, corrections, health, social development and police – is helping many offenders break the cycle of crime and addiction, in turn making Lower Mainland communities safer.”

#### **Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Kerry-Lynne Findlay, QC, MP for Delta-Richmond East –**

“Together with the Government of British Columbia, the Government of Canada is proud to support Vancouver's Drug Treatment Court and pleased to see a very successful first 10-year run.”

“Drug treatment courts fulfil an important goal of Canada's National Anti-Drug Strategy, which is to protect Canadians by providing access to treatment for those addicted to drugs.”

## Quick Facts:

- For those selected for the program, the judge may suspend the imposition of a sentence to allow the addicted person to undergo treatment under very strict conditions. These conditions include judicial supervision, substance abuse treatment, drug testing and social services support. If the person successfully completes the program, the court imposes a reduced sentence.
- After the accused plead guilty, they work with an integrated team of justice, health and social service professionals several times per week and appear weekly in court.
- The team includes specially trained judges, court registry staff, sheriffs, addiction counsellors, probation officers or case managers, defence counsel, and provincial and federal Crown counsel, all of whom work with drug-addicted offenders to change their criminal behaviour and improve their overall health and life skills.
- B.C. has provided \$1.25 million of the DCTV's annual, \$2-million budget since 2006.
- The other five drug treatment courts are in Toronto, Regina, Winnipeg, Ottawa and Edmonton.

A backgrounder follows.

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# BACKGROUNDER

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## **How the Drug Treatment Court of Vancouver works**

### Vancouver's Court: A Unique Model

Services delivered through the Drug Treatment Court of Vancouver (DTCV) address the multiple, often complex needs and challenges of its Downtown Eastside clients. Among the six drug treatment courts that the federal government supports across Canada, the DTCV is unique, as:

- The largest of the six.
- It accepts offenders in active addiction (most of the courts require some "clean" time before admission).
- A federal-provincial partnership (most are partnerships between the federal government and non-profit agencies).

### Philosophy and Approach

Following arrest, an accused submits an application to be considered by the DTCV. Crown counsel screens the application based on established criteria. Applicants admitted to the program attend an intensive, 14-month, supervised day treatment program to address their addiction. The program requires attendance at the Vancouver Drug Court Treatment and Resource Centre several times per week. Participants also make regular court appearances to update the judge and court on their progress.

The services of the DTCV include addiction counsellors, a nurse and physician for prescription of methadone, an income assistance worker for assistance with financial issues, and probation officers/case managers for support with housing and monitoring of progress in the program.

The DTCV is based on a model for processing drug-addicted offenders that emerged in the United States in the late 1980s. It transforms the traditional, formal court process into a rehabilitative model where the judge interacts frequently and directly with the offender. Offenders receive acknowledgement from the judge and court for reaching milestones in the program and for accomplishing goals.

Vancouver's is Canada's second drug treatment court, after Toronto's. The model has also been implemented or considered in Australia, Brazil, Scotland and England.

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