Government of Alberta News Release

Edmonton, February 25, 1998

HIV To Become A Notifiable Disease in Alberta

Recognizing the need for better information on the incidence of HIV infection in order to provide improved education and prevention programming, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) will be added to the list of notifiable diseases in Alberta, announced Health Minister Halvar Jonson.

In making the announcement, Jonson said, "The purpose of including HIV as a notifiable disease is to enhance surveillance of HIV infection to allow for a better understanding of how the infection is progressing or changing."

AIDS, the terminal stage of HIV infection, has been notifiable in Alberta since 1983. However, with the success of current drug therapies, fewer people are developing AIDS which means making HIV infection notifiable will provide a more accurate picture of the current status of the disease at both the provincial and regional level.

"This change will also enhance our ability to ensure those infected with HIV receive appropriate counsel and early access to the expanding range of therapies available," added the Minister. "This is particularly important in the case of pregnant women because medical intervention during pregnancy may prevent HIV infection in their infant."

Jonson stressed that making HIV a notifiable disease does not jeopardize confidentiality, as all information collected falls under the strict guidelines of the Public Health Act. Notifiable diseases are those communicable diseases listed under Schedule 1 and 2 of the Communicable Diseases Regulation and currently include such diseases as chickenpox, tuberculosis and hepatitis B.

By making a disease notifiable, physicians caring for people with HIV infection and public health laboratories that perform HIV testing will be required to report all cases of HIV to regional Medical Officers of Health in a timely manner.

The decision comes into effect May 1, 1998. This allows physicians, health care workers and laboratories time to incorporate the necessary reporting changes. HIV is notifiable in all Canadian jurisdictions except Quebec, British Columbia and the Yukon.

- 30 -

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