



**For Immediate Release**

**March 22, 2007**

**The Office of the Auditor General says that infection prevention, surveillance and control in the province needs work.**

VICTORIA – In a report released today, Acting Auditor General, Arn van Iersel, reported that the Ministry of Health needs to provide a comprehensive framework for infection prevention, surveillance and control across the continuum of care. Further, health authorities need an integrated plan and the necessary resources to meet best practice standards. Surveillance of infections (with the exception of Public Health) is also weak.

The report, titled *Infection Control: Essential for a Healthy British Columbia The Provincial Overview*, assesses the effectiveness of the systems in place throughout the province. In addition to the Provincial Overview there are individual reports on each health authority.

According to van Iersel, “we decided to undertake this audit because events in other provinces and around the world highlight the impact that infections have on both health system costs and on individuals and their families.” In Canada it is estimated that one in nine patients admitted to hospital will develop an infection.

van Iersel notes that surveillance and costing of hospital-acquired infections is weak, although efforts are being made to improve it. He cites the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority as having better data available than the others and for providing some cost data. For example, in 2004 Vancouver Coastal estimated that caring for patients with methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) cost the authority approximately \$4.7 million

There are a number of recommendations made focussing on better staffing of infection control programs, more education for staff, and improved monitoring and reporting. As well, van Iersel notes “the Boards of the authorities need to ensure that the Medical Advisory Committees are fulfilling their mandates.”

van Iersel states that there is much to do to improve infection prevention, surveillance and control in the province but is encouraged that the Ministry of Health and health authorities are taking steps to do so. Some of what needs to be done is as simple as ensuring staff wash their hands before and after each patient encounter.

## **2006/07 Report #11 – Infection Control: Essential for a Healthy British Columbia**

This report is available:

On the Internet at the Office of the Auditor

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