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Ministry of Public Safety
and Solicitor General

Vancouver Drug Court celebrates 10 years of success

VANCOUVER – In the decade since the Drug Treatment Court of Vancouver (DTCV) 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.

“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, in turn making communities in the Lower Mainland safer,” said Shirley Bond Minister of Public Safety, Solicitor General and Attorney General at an event celebrating the milestone.

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 50 per cent over a two-year tracking period.

“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 ten-year run,” said Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay, Q.C., M.P. for Delta-Richmond East and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. “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.”

In the ten 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 under the *Criminal Code of Canada*, and whose offences were motivated by addiction when they committed their crimes, are potentially eligible for DTCV.

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.

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.

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.

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