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## **25 YEARS OF AIDS IN BC MARKED WITH HARD-HITTING PROVINCIAL AD CAMPAIGN**

**Thursday, June 29, 2006, Vancouver, BC** – The BC Persons With AIDS Society (BCPWA Society), a non-profit, consumer-driven organization in its 20<sup>th</sup> year of operation, unveiled details of its forthcoming province-wide campaign to end HIV-related stigma at a media launch in Vancouver today. Beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>, and running for one full year, 40 participating radio and television stations across BC will broadcast a series of two 30second public service announcements which have been developed to address issues of HIV-related stigma and discrimination. The hard-hitting advertisements have received programming approval by telecaster, the Television Bureau of Canada.

The campaign is made possible by the BC Association of Broadcasters (BCAB), whose Board of Directors each year selects one or two non-profit organizations to receive their prestigious Humanity Award, entitling the recipient to extensive broadcast media exposure, valued commercially at roughly \$3 million.

The radio and TV advertisements might be considered bold, but Directors of the BCPWA Society are willing to assume the risk, particularly to draw attention to the seriousness of the issue. "This campaign highlights the impact of living in a culture that appears polite and accepting on the surface, but still harbours deep rooted prejudices that are expressed in subtler ways," says the Society's Board Chair, Paul Lewand. Most people recognize and disapprove of discrimination in areas like employment, housing, and health care, Lewand explains. But stigmatization isn't always so straightforward. "We want to spur discussion among families and communities to dispel myths and prejudices associated with HIV," he says.

Behind this creatively compelling campaign is Canada's largest advertising agency, the award-winning Cossette Communication Group, and local production company, Steam Films. Both companies volunteered their time and donated their resources to develop both the advertisements and the campaign website. "This was an important campaign for us" explained Richard Hadden, President and Creative Director of Cossette. "25 years after the epidemic began, there has been tremendous progress in the areas of science and prevention, but the social stigma attached to the disease lives on. We felt it crucial for our campaign to take a very direct look at exposing and confronting some of the ill-informed prejudices that those living with HIV have to confront everyday."

BCPWA Society's campaign to end HIV stigma campaign includes a television and radio advertisement component, a website ([www.endHIVstigma.ca](http://www.endHIVstigma.ca)), and a toll-free telephone number (1.866.443.AIDS) for British Columbians seeking further information or support.

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