

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BC Persons With AIDS Society changes its name to Positive Living BC

HIV-positive British Columbians mark a new era for their community

VANCOUVER, BC—HIV-positive British Columbians redefined their collective identity today by officially renaming Western Canada's largest HIV/AIDS* organization "Positive Living Society of British Columbia (Positive Living BC)". Most recently known as "British Columbia Persons With AIDS Society (BCPWA)", Positive Living BC will build on the Society's 25-year history of empowering persons living with HIV/AIDS through mutual support and collective action—but for the first time, the Society will pursue its mission without specifying the virus or the disease in its title. "Positive Living BC" was chosen by popular vote among HIV-positive Society members exclusively, to best represent the current lived-experience of individuals within our province's HIV-positive community.

"Twenty-five years ago, HIV-positive British Columbians could adequately connect as 'persons with AIDS' because that's who we expected to become," says Glyn Townson, Board Chair of Positive Living BC. "Thanks to radical advancements made in HIV treatment over the past decade, most long-term survivors and newly diagnosed individuals in BC can now live with HIV as a chronic inflammatory illness rather than a precursor to a terminal one. Our members' decision to align our Society's name with the spirit of this lifestyle marks a new era of hope, promise and longevity for BC's HIV-positive community."

Positive Living BC's membership is comprised of more than 4,900 HIV-positive individuals, making it the largest HIV/AIDS organization in Western Canada, and the largest HIV-positive member-based and -directed organization in the country. In this position, the Society offers unprecedented insight to the needs and objectives of the HIV-positive community at-large.

"By choosing to remove 'AIDS' from our public identity, Society members have sent a strong message about the role HIV-positive individuals intend to play in BC's cultural landscape," explains Townson. "Old labels no longer apply, and no longer will they set us apart from any other British Columbian. 'Positive Living' defines us by the active, healthy approach we now take to life with our disease."

Members arrived at the new name after an intensive brainstorming and voting process. In December 2010, the Society's Board of Directors responded to members' growing concern about the relevance of BCPWA's brand by petitioning members to put forth suggestions for a new Society name. In January 2011, the Board shortlisted the suggestions and presented members with a mail-in ballot listing seven name-change options. Voting members ranked the options by order of personal preference.

The approved name change still needs to be accepted by the provincial Government's Registrar of Companies, but at this point that is little more than a formality. The name should be legally changed within the next two months. During that time, the Society will develop a new brand identity to match the name. A new logo and website

www.positivelivingbc.org) will be launched by mid-April, and both will be influenced by member feedback. The Society's location, office hours, and its phone and fax number will remain unchanged. Members will continue to access existing services, as usual.

"While the name change is historic and momentous, the most important things about our Society are unaffected by it," Townson assures. "Positive Living BC will maintain our vision of a future wherein HIV-positive British Columbians are healthy and free to lead purposeful and actively engaged lives in an accepting, inclusive community. We will do this with a new name and a new look...and we will do so with the same strong heart that has animated our Society over the past 25 years."

*Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)

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