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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

### **ROAD CRASH VICTIMS REMEMBERED**

VICTORIA – B.C. is moving ahead with an aggressive road safety campaign to prevent the crashes that kill an average of 424 British Columbians each year, Solicitor General Kash Heed said today as B.C. marked its second National Day of Remembrance for Road Crash Victims.

“The cost of road crashes to individuals and families is immeasurable, with hundreds dead every year and another 4,000 seriously injured,” said Heed. “We owe it to the memory of those who have lost their lives to be smarter about driving by wearing seatbelts, staying sober, and simply paying more attention to the road.”

The Province has been working to reduce the number of road accidents through a number of key programs, most recently through changes to the Motor Vehicle Act to deal with distracted driving. The changes, which will come into force Friday, Jan. 1 2010, mean only hands-free cell phones and devices that require one touch to activate will be permitted. Drivers in the Graduated Licensing Program will face the further restriction of not being permitted to use hands-free cell phones. Fines of \$167 will be levied for violations, beginning Monday, Feb. 1, 2010.

“Most crashes are preventable and we all play a role in making our roads safer,” said Nicolas Jimenez, ICBC road safety director. “In honour of crash victims and their loved ones, we’d like to ask everyone to identify and commit to improving one of their own driving behaviours. Making smart driving decisions is something we can all do to help protect ourselves and our families.”

Other provincial road safety initiatives in recent years include:

- Bringing in stronger impaired driving legislation with enhanced enforcement, increased penalties and mandatory rehabilitation.
- Expanding the Province's ignition interlock program.
- Taking action on street racing, with provisions that mean vehicles used to street race can be impounded on the spot and the driver’s licence suspended immediately. Drivers who speed or race can receive penalty points and fines of up to \$2,000, and be charged under the Criminal Code.
- Enhancing B.C.’s Graduated Licence Program to allow authorities to make new drivers who are suspended for any reason repeat their two-year novice period.
- Bringing in civil forfeiture legislation that gives the Province the power to seize and sell the vehicles of high-risk drivers where someone is injured or killed, as well as vehicles of drivers whose risky behaviour is likely to cause serious injury or death.

- Increasing the fine for not wearing a seatbelt from \$138 to \$167. B.C.'s Driver Improvement Program identifies high-risk drivers and intervenes to encourage them to change driving behaviour through early warning to prohibition from driving.
- Enhancing infant restraint and booster seat requirements to better protect child passengers, as well as removing several driver exemptions related to these requirements.
- Limiting the number of passengers allowed in a vehicle to the number of available seatbelts, and creating new offences for employers and owners of commercial vehicles who allow a vehicle to be operated with more passengers than its capacity or without seatbelts.

Nationally, nearly 3,000 people die each year on Canada's roads, with another 200,000 injured. The National Day of Remembrance for Road Crash Victims was first marked by Canada in 2005 to honour these Canadians and to raise awareness about what people can do to increase safety behind the wheel. It occurs annually on the third Wednesday of November as part of the World Day of Remembrance for Road Crash Victims, which is overseen by the World Health Organization as a significant health issue. Approximately 1.2 million people around the world are killed each year in road crashes.

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