

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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USE FIRST UNITED NATIONS' DEMOCRACY DAY TO REGISTER TO VOTE

VICTORIA – B.C.’s Chief Electoral Officer Harry Neufeld today called on British Columbians to take a moment on the first ever International Day of Democracy to register to vote or confirm or update their voter registration for the 2009 provincial election.

“The United Nations’ inaugural International Day of Democracy on September 15, 2008, reminds us of the importance of a healthy democracy and the fundamental role voting plays in maintaining the health of our democracy,” Neufeld said. “Registering to vote and exercising this important constitutional right is fundamental to the success of the democracy we have come to enjoy as Canadians.”

Neufeld said the concept of democracy is often taken for granted until we see news images of people in Iraq and other countries traveling great distances to stand in line to vote.

“The right to vote means so much to people who haven’t had it,” Neufeld added. “We celebrate the images of free and fair elections; we are very troubled when we see news of elections that do not represent democratic principles.”

Neufeld said voting is just one part of a healthy democracy but a critical part.

“The first International Day of Democracy is the perfect time to ensure you are registered to vote in a British Columbia provincial election. I encourage all persons, particularly those who have recently turned 18 years of age, to take a moment on September 15 to register.”

To be eligible to vote in a B.C. provincial election, a person must be a Canadian citizen, 18 years of age and a resident of B.C. for six months or more. Elections BC offers an online voter registration service at www.elections.bc.ca or you can call Elections BC toll free at 1-800-661-8683 for assistance with your voter registration.

“In declaring September 15 of each year as the International Day of Democracy, the United Nations has reaffirmed democracy as ‘...a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of life.’ Democracy may not be an appealing topic of conversation for many people, but it shapes our lives and the freedoms we enjoy every day,” Neufeld said.

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NEWS EDITORS/DIRECTORS NOTE: Chief Electoral Officer Harry Neufeld will be available for media interviews about democracy and Democracy Day on September 11, 12 and 15.

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