

## Get Your Butt Over Here!

Giant Colon Tour Kicks Off Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, while Canadians Encouraged to Take a Closer Look at Their Behinds

**Montreal, March 3, 2009** – Colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer death in Canada, yet we don't discuss it because it involves parts of the body we don't like to talk about. Last year, an estimated 21,500 Canadians were diagnosed with colorectal cancer and sadly approximately 8,900 died from it. March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month and it is time we get over our embarrassment and start talking about our butts.

To launch National Colorectal Cancer Awareness month, this March, the Colorectal Cancer Association of Canada (CCAC) is launching The Giant Colon Tour – inviting Canadians to walk through a 40-foot colon, educating them on the signs and symptoms of colorectal cancer and other diseases of the colon.

The CCAC is celebrating the many great improvements made to colorectal cancer prevention and care in Canada this past year, and is announcing its commitment to build on this success.

### **“Watch your Butt” takes on a whole new meaning**

Over the past few years, there have been some exciting changes to the state of colorectal cancer prevention and treatment in Canada. Although screening has not been implemented on a national scale for this highly preventable disease, some provinces have made significant progress and the population has been encouraged by the CCAC through its “At 50 Watch your Butt” television and radio ad campaigns, to get screened.

This past year, Ontario officially launched their screening program for colorectal cancer across the province, while Alberta and Manitoba are expanding their programs province-wide. British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia are commencing their respective test sites as well, although Quebec and the other provinces have been slow to respond. “Province-wide population-based screening programs are critical to reduce the number of fatalities from colorectal cancer,” said Barry D. Stein, President of the CCAC. “The time is now for the rest of the country to get on board and join those provinces that have already taken the first steps to saving lives from this devastating disease.”

Helping patients battling colorectal cancer with access to effective medications is equally important to the CCAC. Access to effective medications has seen recent progress in Canada, but not enough according to Stein. “We believe that all Canadians affected by colorectal cancer should have equal access to the most effective medications to fight their disease, regardless of where they live,” said Stein. Last year, the CCAC launched a major national letter-writing campaign called “Access to Treatment”, urging provincial governments to cover new and effective medicines for the disease approved by Health Canada and this campaign will continue with new energy this year. Following this campaign, Nova Scotia and Ontario announced funding for Avastin, a life-extending medication for advanced colorectal cancer patients. These

provinces now join British Columbia, Quebec, Newfoundland and Saskatchewan in covering the drug.

“The CCAC is pleased with these decisions, however, we are already looking to the future for colorectal cancer care,” said Stein. “Personalized medicine is at our door-step and we must ensure that all provinces provide access to these newer medications. If we are to cure cancer we must encourage new innovation and technology and ensure that Canadians have access to these new advances”, said Stein

Stein is referring to a new generation of biologics and small molecules now approved by Health Canada which allow healthcare professionals to look beyond symptoms, test results and medical history, and consider patients’ genetic make-up to help them determine how they will respond to treatment. “Two new products, Vectibix™ (panitumumab) and Erbitux™ (cetuximab), have already been approved by Health Canada and both represent important new options for colorectal cancer patients whose disease has progressed following standard chemotherapy regimens,” said Stein. “We encourage all provinces to approve these new medications to offer these patients who have advanced disease new hope and improve their quality of life,” Stein added.

### **Walk through a colon... Literally!**

The CCAC is launching The Giant Colon Tour to inform the public about the signs and symptoms of colorectal cancer and other diseases of the colon. This gigantic, 40-foot walk-through replica of the human colon is an interactive and educational multi-media exhibit where visitors will receive healthy lifestyle tips and explanations of the various diseases.

“It really upsets me to see the statistics when we know very well that colorectal cancer is preventable, treatable and beatable, if diagnosed early” said Stein. “We strongly believe that educating the public is the key to reducing colorectal cancer related deaths and this is why we are so excited to launch the Giant Colon Tour.”

The CCAC will work in partnership with the different organizations, health centres, screening networks and cancer agencies to bring this exhibit to communities across Canada. The Giant Colon Tour starts in Montreal in March and has been confirmed to visit Timmins, ON; Sudbury, ON, Sault Ste. Marie, ON; Kitchener, ON and Vancouver, BC, and more sites are in the works.

### **About Colorectal Cancer**

Colorectal cancer, cancer of the colon or rectum, is the second-leading cause of cancer death in Canada. The disease surpasses both breast and prostate cancer in mortality.

Though highly preventable and curable when detected early, an estimated 21,500 Canadians were diagnosed with the colorectal cancer last year, and approximately 8,900 died from it.

An almost equal number of men and women are affected by colorectal cancer. One in 14 men and one in 16 women are expected to develop the disease during their lifetime. One in 28 men and one in 31 women will die from it.

## **About the CCAC**

The Colorectal Cancer Association of Canada is the country's leading non-profit organization dedicated to increasing awareness of colorectal cancer, supporting patients and advocating for national screening and timely access to effective treatment options.

The CCAC welcomes all Canadians interested in their health and their loved ones, to visit their website, [www.colorectal-cancer.ca](http://www.colorectal-cancer.ca), for up-to-date information on colorectal cancer or to call a toll-free number, 1.877.50.COLON(26566) to order free copies of helpful educational materials.

For more information about the Colorectal Cancer Association of Canada including The Giant Colon Tour, volunteering or participating in various fundraising events, support programs or advocacy initiatives, to make a donation or to schedule an interview with Barry Stein, President, please contact:

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