



## **Province licenced first group of acupuncturists**

In a historic ceremony, the College of Acupuncturists of B.C. granted licenses to a first group of 68 acupuncturists today. The Hon. Minister of Health and Responsible for Seniors, Penny Priddy, together with the Chair of the College, Mr. Mason Loh, Q.C., greeted some 200 dignitaries at the Vancouver General Hospital auditorium.

"This is a great day for everyone," said Mason Loh, "the public waited a long time for a registration program so that they do not need to "shop around" for a qualified acupuncturist; while acupuncturists prefer government's regulations to assure the public that only qualified ones are allowed to practise."

Acupuncturists first began lobbying government to regulate the profession in the early eighties. It was not until 1996 when the government passed an acupuncturist regulation that the College of Acupuncturists of B.C. was formed. Since then, the College focused its efforts in detailing how acupuncturists, who are trained from many places all over the world, including Canada, may be certified for registration to practise in B.C.

"This historic ceremony," said Loh, a Vancouver lawyer who sits as a public member on the Board of the College, "is a culmination of 18 years of efforts by government officials, acupuncturists, health professionals and caring public members. Many are still involved today and are guiding the College in its development. I am very thankful to all of them."

The 68 registered acupuncturists are certified through a grandfathering provision. The College evaluates applicants' qualifications based on a combination of their practice experience in B.C. and their education, which typically lasted 3 to 5 years in a university or an acupuncture institute. The College will continue to evaluate applicants and issue licenses in the next one and a half year. After that, everyone who has the required education will also write an open qualifying examination before registration is granted.