

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release
April 19, 2012

Northern Health Board celebrates capital announcements in Burns Lake, Queen Charlotte/Haida Gwaii and Prince George

The Northern Health Board of Directors met in Terrace for its latest regular meeting, where they celebrated recent announcements that will lead to new hospitals in Queen Charlotte/Haida Gwaii and Burns Lake, and a medical learning and teaching space at the University Hospital of Northern British Columbia in Prince George. The investments mark nearly \$120 million in new investment in health care facilities and infrastructure in northern BC.

"We are building a comprehensive and unique system of integrated primary health care throughout our communities," said Dr. Charles Jago, NH Board Chair. "The commitment of government to fund the educational and facility needs will ensure we continue to meet the health needs of northerners."

Additional capital highlights that were also discussed included the three month countdown event last week for the new Fort St. John Hospital and Peace Villa Residential Care facilities, and an update on the Northern Cancer Control Strategy and BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North. Both projects are on time and on budget and the planning to move into both facilities is in full-swing.

"Moving staff, equipment and patients from one hospital to another is a complex job that requires planning and coordination to be exact," said Cathy Ulrich, CEO of Northern Health. "The work our staff are doing will ensure the move into both a brand new hospital and the Cancer Centre goes flawlessly."

In addition to the information the Board received, Dr. Jaco Fourie, Medical Lead Oncology, presented on his role as a general practitioner in the Northwest. Key to his ability to provide services close to home is the role of Telehealth in the Community Cancer Clinics. Dr. Fourie described the provision of patient care across multiple communities through video conferencing in partnership with other physicians and patients.

"The increase in access and utilization of Telehealth is a critical element of the

Northern Cancer Control Strategy," said Dr. Ronald Chapman, NH chief medical health officer. "Our ability to provide as many services as we can in the community is essential as we build a strong network across the region."

Wellness in Northern BC (WINBC) was also presented to the Board by Dr. Geoff Payne. WINBC is a partnership between UNBC, the Northern Medical Society, Northern Medical Program, Northern Health and Pacific Sport Northern BC, and the, and continues to grow. WINBC will focus on healthy lifestyles, and physical activity in particular, for all northerners through the development of a continuum of education, research, innovation, practice, infrastructure, and public policy.

"We have a unique opportunity and an obligation to align education, legislation, sport, health and research on a common platform," said Dr. Geoff Payne. "The coming 2015 Winter Games provides a timely catalyst to bring all the parties together and to ensure a legacy for all residents remains long after the games are over."

In addition to the physician presentations, Jane Lindstrom, vice-president of human resources, provided information on physician and staff recruitment initiatives and the current status of vacancies across the region. Also, the District of Stewart made a presentation to the Board on palliative services and transportation concerns in their community.

"We take every opportunity to hear and discuss concerns raised by community leaders," said Dr. Jago. "These conversations are informative for Northern Health as we work to address the health needs of the residents of Northern BC."

The Board also discussed the latest financial report. Northern Health continues to forecast that NH will end the year with a small surplus of approximately \$4 million.

The next NH Board of Directors meeting will take place on June 18/19 in Fort St. John.