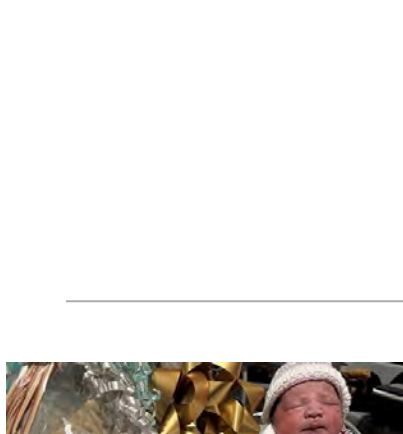


December 2025/January 2026

Welcome to the Northern Health community update! Stay connected as we bring you monthly updates and valuable insight into health care in the North.

Want more frequent updates? [Follow Northern Health on Facebook](#) where we share news, stories, tips and ideas on healthy living.

Organization and Community News



Informing about emergency department status in the North

Keep up to date! Northern Health would like to announce the launch of the Emergency Department Status web page - designed to keep you informed about the status of emergency departments in your area.

Whether it's a late-night emergency or a weekend mishap, our page will help you quickly find out which emergency departments are open or temporarily closed, ensuring you have access to the information you need when you need it most.

[Check it out now](#) and stay prepared! Always call 9-1-1 in the event of a life-threatening emergency for transport to the nearest available emergency department.

[Read the BV Government news release here.](#)



First Northern Health baby of 2026 born in Terrace

Every New Year's Day, Northern Health monitors its hospitals and labour and delivery units for the birth of New Year's babies across the region. The Northern Health region's first baby born in 2026 was born in Terrace, and it's a girl! Watch [this page](#) for updates on the birth of 2026 New Year's babies in communities across the North.



For the North, in the North: Residency program prepares physicians for rural practice

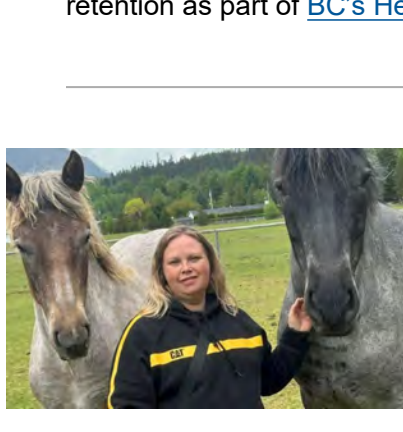
For Dr. Bron Finkelstein, returning to Northern BC wasn't just a career move - it was a homecoming.

"I'm a rural family doctor, first and foremost," Finkelstein said. "I wanted to do full-service family medicine after I finished medical school, and Prince George was a very natural fit. It was close to my home, but also had a really strong program and a good reputation for training up rural doctors." [Read Dr. Finkelstein's full story here.](#)



Growing smiles in Northern communities

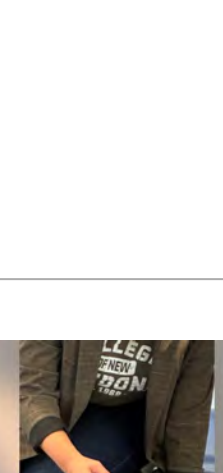
Moments of connection remind us about the importance of community. One group bringing joy to communities in Northern BC, wherever they go, is Desert Hills Ranch. A dedicated food supplier from Ashcroft, BC, they are committed to nourishing both body and spirit. Known for their generosity and vibrant energy, their visits to long-term care homes have become a cherished tradition. Each visit begins with a warm greeting and a donation of fresh fruits and vegetables. Working closely with our kitchen contractors, the bulk of the donations are incorporated into daily menus for meals and snacks, while some produce is set aside for residents to take home. This thoughtful process ensures that everyone benefits from the gift of healthy food. [Read the full story on our website.](#)



PetSmart, NH Connections, and Northern Health team up to deliver the holidays

The holidays will be a bit softer and cuddlier this season. PetSmart Prince George has been running the [PetSmart Charities Holiday Chance & Friends Program](#) fundraiser since 2013, with children in UHNBC's pediatric ward receiving stuffed animals around the holidays – a way to make their hospital experience a bit more joyful. However, this year – this effort has grown substantially.

"It's been a way for PetSmart to give back to the communities that support our stores all year long," said Sydney Gish, store manager of the Prince George location. [Read the full story here.](#)



Appropriate use of the emergency department and options for accessing health care

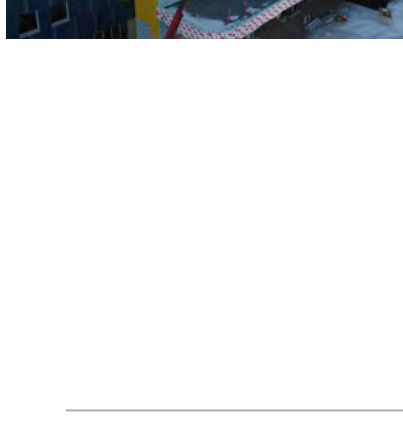
Emergency rooms in the North may be facing increasing strain. Help take the pressure off the doctors and nurses that serve our communities by seeking care through these options, when you can:

- Call your family care provider
- Visit an urgent primary care centre or primary care clinic if one is available in your community
- Check out [HealthLinkBC.ca](#) or speak to a nurse at 8-1-1
- Talk to your local pharmacist about their expanded services, and [book an appointment with a pharmacist.](#)
- If you do not have a family doctor or nurse practitioner, book an appointment with the [Northern Health Virtual Clinic](#) at 1-844-645-7811
- Call 1-855-344-3800 to book an appointment with the [First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day](#)

For life-threatening emergencies like chest pains, difficulty breathing, broken bones, or severe bleeding, the ER is the place to be. Call 9-1-1 for transport to your nearest available and appropriate facility. For more information, please visit our [service interruptions page](#). [NH's Emergency Dept Status webpage](#) provides information on the open/temporarily closed status of Emergency Departments across the region.

Health Human Resources (HHR)

The items in this Health Human Resources (HHR) section highlight some of NH's efforts to strengthen health care in the North by improving staff recruitment and retention as part of [BC's Health Human Resources Strategy](#).



Healing hooves: How Nicole Hendry and horses help high-risk youth

Nicole Hendry began her journey with the Integrated Child and Youth (ICY) team in Terrace two years ago. This is a multi-disciplinary team that plays a key role in the Province's efforts to create a coordinated, comprehensive system of care for mental health and addictions. While supporting students at a local secondary school, she joined a weekly outing to the riding stable and saw an opportunity. [Read more.](#)



First SEED program cohort wraps, inspiring future health care professionals!

Northern Health's (NH) Student Practice Education Team – in collaboration with School District 57, the College of New Caledonia (CNC), the University of Northern BC (UNBC), Northern Health Volunteer Services, and NH Recruitment – wrapped up the Seek, Experience, Explore, Discover (SEED) program last month and is getting ready to welcome new cohorts in 2026. This program is an important initiative designed to give local high school students a first-hand look at careers in health care. [Read more.](#)



Empowering health care through simulation in Northern BC

In the heart of Northern BC, Northern Health's Northern Clinical Simulation (NCS) Program is transforming health care education through immersive, hands-on learning experiences. With simulation centres located in Prince George, Fort St. John, Terrace, and Quesnel. The program equips health care professionals with the skills and confidence needed to deliver safe, effective care. [Read more](#)



Celebrating leadership growth: Stacey's journey to Certified Health Executive

Northern Health (NH) is proud to celebrate the achievement of Stacey Pickering, Regional Director of Employee Experience and Organizational Development, who last year completed the Certified Health Executive (CHE) program and was awarded the CHE designation through the Canadian College of Health Leaders (CCHL). This milestone reflects not only Stacey's personal commitment to leadership excellence but also the opportunities NH provides for professional growth that helped prepare her for this undertaking. [Read more.](#)

Recruiters on the road

NH's staff and physician recruitment teams have been out in full swing, sharing what kinds of opportunities set Northern BC apart. The recruiters have attended or presented at:

- Canadian Association of Pharmacy Students and Interns Conference

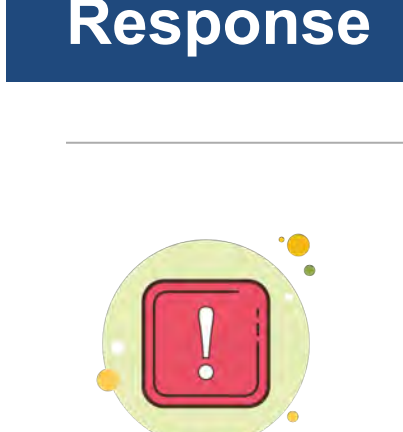
To see highlights of these events and conferences, check out [Northern Health Careers](#).

Capital Projects



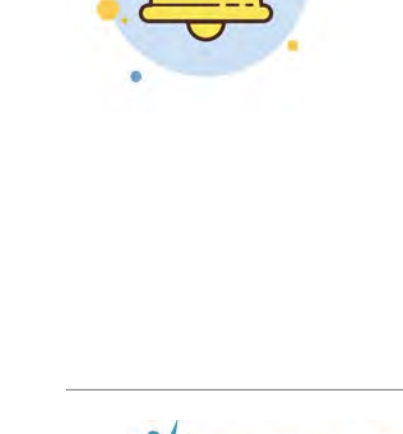
FAQ: What's going to happen to the current Dawson Creek & District Hospital?

Many residents have been wondering what will happen to the current Dawson Creek & District Hospital (DCDH) once the new hospital opens. Health care services will continue to be delivered at the current hospital while construction is underway on the new hospital – which is expected to be open, operational and ready for patients in Spring 2027. [Read the FAQ here.](#)



Dawson Creek & District Hospital - A bright welcome: Tuscan Sun panels complete the hospital's exterior

The new Dawson Creek and District Hospital continues to transform our skyline – and the latest milestone is hard to miss. Visible from most locations within the city, the reveal of the Tuscan Sun ACM panels adds a warm, golden hue to the building's exterior. To view photos and watch a video of the reveal, visit the [Let's Talk page](#).



Dawson Creek & District Hospital - Health Care Relocations (HCR) onboarded and getting ready for the big move

Planning is well underway to ensure a safe and seamless transition for patients, staff, and services when we move into the new hospital.

We're excited to share that Health Care Relocations (HCR) has been onboarded to guide us through every step of this process. [Read the full story here](#)

University Hospital of Northern British Columbia - Acute Care Tower exciting milestone: alliance development agreement signed

We're happy to share an important step forward for the University Hospital of Northern British Columbia (UHNBC) Acute Care Tower project: the signing of the Alliance Development Agreement (ADA).

The ADA officially forms the alliance, a collaborative approach that brings together Northern Health, EllisDon, DIALOG, PML Professional Mechanical, and Houle Electric, working alongside Infrastructure BC. This agreement establishes a foundation of shared responsibility, transparency, and collective decision-making, ensuring all partners work toward common goals and commit to resolving challenges together. [Read more.](#)

University Hospital of Northern British Columbia - Acute Care Tower: Zoning is approved – so what does that mean?

On December 3, 2025, Prince George city council approved new zoning for the hospital site. This decision will guide our project team as we move through planning and design for the new tower.

Zoning might not sound exciting, but it's a big part of what makes this project possible. The approval gives us the room and flexibility we need to update the spaces that better support the growing health care needs of people across Northern BC. [Read the full story on our website](#)

Northern Health Story Highlights

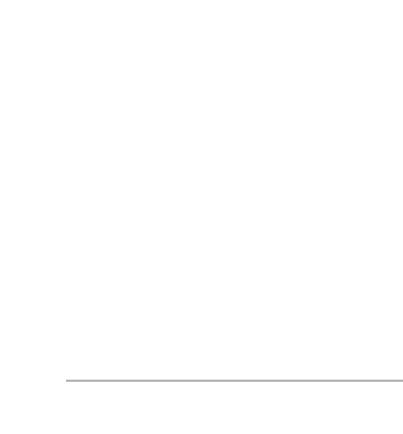
The [Northern Health Stories site](#) is a great place to read about what's going on in Northern Health – people, places, projects, and more! Here are some recent highlights:



- [International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [NorthCAN: How developing low-carbon collaboration is benefiting the North](#)
- [Five tips to stay healthy as the season turns](#)
- [Cozy holiday dessert vibes: Wild rice pudding with caramel sauce](#)
- [Food is medicine. Food is culture. Food is reconciliation.](#)
- [Self-care matters: Finding time for yourself after baby arrives](#)
- [Care in every purple cap: Community-wide support for new families](#)
- [Coming soon to Northern Health – Standardized resuscitation carts](#)

Ministry of Health highlights

Including highlights from the [Ministry of Health](#) and [Ministry of Mental Health & Addictions](#) that are of interest to all BC residents:



- [Province provides second report on community-based primary care services](#)
- [New guidance on Mental Health Act will help keep young people safe](#)
- [Minister's statement on status of the decriminalization pilot program](#)
- [Province takes action to reduce administration, prioritize front-line health care](#)

Public Health



End of BC's Decriminalization Pilot Program

On January 31, 2023, an exemption to the federal Controlled Drugs and Substances Act came into effect in British Columbia as a three-year pilot removing criminal penalties for the possession of small amounts of some illicit substances for personal use by people over 18 years old.

The decriminalization exemption expired on January 31, 2026, and [will not be renewed](#), making possession of any amount of illicit substances illegal and enforceable anywhere that does not have an exemption such as supervised consumption and drug checking sites. Consumption of drugs in overdose prevention sites is still permitted under a provincial [Ministerial Order](#).

More information:

- [Decriminalization in B.C. - BCCDC](#)
- [Minister's statement on status of the decriminalization pilot program](#)
- [FNHA statement on BC decriminalization pilot project](#)

Northern Health Communities E-Brief – January 2026

The E-Brief is a monthly newsletter sharing resources, learning opportunities, and grant funding that supports community health in Northern BC. [Check out what's new for January 2026.](#)

To subscribe to this monthly newsletter, please email healthycommunities@northernhealth.ca with the subject line "subscribe."

Overdose Prevention and Response

Toxic drug alert: Smithers – December 8, 2025

Northern Health and FNHA are issuing a drug alert for the community of Smithers. A dark blue drug sold as "down" has been reported to be much stronger than expected and has highly sedative effects that last for extended periods of time. This is occurring whether smoked or injected. For more details, [visit our website.](#)

Text alerts for toxic drugs available in the North

In response to the toxic drug emergency, a text message alert system has been implemented across Northern Health. The system sends text alerts with timely information and up-to-date resources to people who use drugs, those who support them, and community members. It's a public health measure to prevent drug poisonings and deaths and provides. Opt-in by texting [JOIN to ALERTS \(253787\)](#). [More information.](#)

