



Northern Directions

A monthly update from Northern Health to stakeholders across the North
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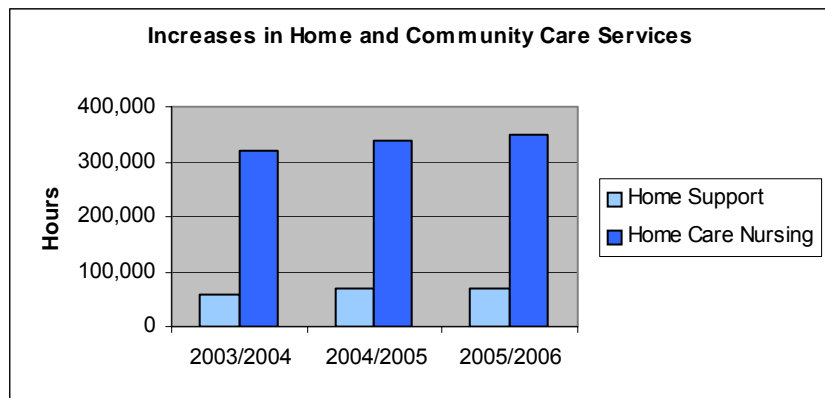
From Northern Health Board Chair Harry Gairns...

Our Board had the pleasure of visiting Fort St. John in the middle of May for our most recent meeting. Holding our meetings around the region helps us understand just how vast an area we serve, and gives us a better opportunity to hear about local health issues and concerns. We certainly appreciated the opportunity to visit the community and its health facilities, and the chance to speak with staff in those facilities.

A significant item from the most recent meeting was the approval of our operating budget for the fiscal year 2004-2005. We'll be spending over \$448 million on health services across our region this year, with a focus on putting as much of our budget as possible into direct services for our patients, clients, and residents.

One area of increased spending we're pleased to offer is nearly \$2 million of additional money into home and community care services. This will help support more adult day centre spaces, more home care nursing, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, and enhanced geriatric services.

As part of this new spending, we



are projecting significant increases in our home support and home care nursing hours for the upcoming year. This will help us better support seniors and others with health needs as they continue to live in the community.

Home support is expected to climb from 59,450 hours in 2003-2004 to 68,700 hours in 2004-2005. Home care nursing is projected to go up from 318,700 hours in 2003-2004 to 338,000 hours in 2004-2005, and 348,000 hours in 2005-2006.

I'm also pleased to see our long-awaited community consultation process get underway. As you've likely seen in earlier correspondence and in ads/news stories in your local newspapers, we will

be running community workshops and forums over the next several weeks, to get a better idea about health needs in the north.

We have many ways for northern residents to take part in the process, by pre-registering for a forum, taking part in an open house, or filling out a workbook... either on-line or in hard-copy.

If you'd like more information on the community consultation process, please visit our website at www.northernhealth.ca. We are very encouraged about the amount of interest in the consultation process so far, and are confident it will bring forward many positive ideas as we provide health services in the North.



northern health

New PGRH Emergency Room opens its doors

The redevelopment of Prince George Regional Hospital reached another major milestone in May, with the completion of the hospital's new emergency room and renal services department. These projects have been underway since last fall, following completion of the new PGRH Patient Care Addition.

Some highlights of the new emergency department include:

- Expanding the department from 630 square meters to 1,430 square meters (including acute emerg, minor treatment, and the new ambulance garage)
- A new ambulance garage, so care providers don't have to brave the elements to treat patients when they first arrive at the hospital.
- A new decontamination area, immediately available from the new ambulance garage
- A new trauma resuscitation area that can accommodate four acutely injured patients, helping fulfill the facility's role as a regional trauma centre
- Two new isolation rooms for patients with infectious diseases
- Two new seclusion rooms for violent patients
- A much larger communications centre/work area
- Separate triage and clerk areas, to better maintain patient confidentiality
- Dedicated waiting space for minor treatment and acute emerg patients, and better separation between those patients



NH Board Member Roseline Ferré, Prince George North MLA Pat Bell, Prince George Mayor Colin Kinsley, and Northern Interior Chief Operating Officer Michael McMillan tour the newly expanded PGRH emergency room.

- More washroom space (up from one washroom for men/one for women, to seven for clients and three for staff)
- Key points about the new renal services area include:
- The addition of six new hemodialysis stations, raising the total number of dialysis chairs to 20. This is part of an overall expansion of dialysis services provided by the BC Provincial Renal Agency.
 - An expansion of the department's space from about 400 square meters to 760 square meters
 - Consolidation of renal services such

as the Transplant Clinic, Peritoneal Dialysis Clinic and Chronic Kidney Disease Clinic into one area, much closer to the hospital's new main entrance for easier patient access

More work is taking place on the hospital's Ambulatory Care department, which should be running by the end of June. PGRH's intensive care unit will move into an expanded space in the summer, along with the facility's cancer care unit.

The Government of British Columbia and the Fraser Fort George Regional Hospital District are funding the \$50 million PGRH redevelopment project on a 60-40 split.

Northern Health's current financial picture...

Our financial statements for the last two months of the fiscal year show that Northern Health completed 2003-2004 with a deficit of \$4.454 million, which was \$655,000 higher than expected.

This higher deficit is due to a \$671,000 one-time adjustment related to accounting practices for benefit costs administered through Healthcare Benefit Trust, the organization that provides a

benefit plan for health employees across British Columbia. In its budget plan for the last two years, Northern Health intended to use a \$3.79 million surplus from 2002-2003 to balance a \$3.79 million deficit in 2003-2004.

Northern Health will be considering how to pay off this unexpected charge, possibly in a lump sum payment or over a longer term through changes to

premium payments.

Auditors have started their regular annual audit of Northern Health's financial statements to finalize the financial position from the 2003-2004 fiscal year. That work is expected to be completed shortly.

Our financial statement to the end of March is available below...

Operating Expenses and Year End Forecast by Program (Period 13) Year to Date ended March 31 2003 (figures in thousands \$)			
	Year to date Budget	YTD Actual	YTD Variance
REVENUE			
BC Ministry of Health Revenue	314,093	317,878	3,785
Other Revenue	109,475	115,647	6,172
TOTAL REVENUES	423,568	433,525	9,957
EXPENSES			
Acute Service	160,197	168,544	(8,348)
Home and Community	61,316	65,585	(4,268)
Community Programs	55,928	54,947	982
Support Services	45,399	48,097	(2,698)
Physicians	35,474	35,066	409
Regional Service	35,053	34,827	226
Undistributed	29,147	30,914	(1,767)
Contingent Expense	4,852	0	4,852
TOTAL EXPENSES	427,367	437,979	(10,613)
TOTAL SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(3,799)	(4,454)	(655)

Northern Health recruits nearly all of UNBC's graduating class in nursing

Northern Health is welcoming a number of new faces to the organization after hiring nearly all of this year's University of Northern British Columbia graduating class in nursing.

33 of 38 nurses in this year's class have accepted full-time positions in Northern Health sites. These new nurses will assume jobs in acute care sites, mental health and addictions settings, and public health units in Fort St. John, Prince Rupert, Terrace, Vanderhoof, Quesnel and Prince George.

Recruitment of these new nurses from UNBC is a significant step in Northern Health's long-term approach to attract and retain health professionals. It's an important development, given strong competition in nursing recruitment from health providers worldwide.

Surveys of UNBC alumni have also shown that graduates from the university's health professions programs (including nursing) continue to live and work in the North at a rate higher than graduates of other UNBC programs. These surveys bode well for the predicted success of the Northern Medical Program in retaining



Fort St. John Hospital Registered Nurse Julie White (left) is one of this year's 33 UNBC Nursing graduates who have accepted positions with Northern Health. Julie is working along-side fellow Fort St. John RN Janice Hendricks (right).

physicians for the North.

Northern Health will continue to study and implement recruitment and retention initiatives, so enough new personnel will be available to offset expected retirements over the next decade. This includes forming a dedicated nursing recruitment team to address specific needs across the entire region.

"We estimate that about half of our current 1,600 registered nurses will be eligible to retire within the next ten years," said Cathy Ulrich, Northern Health's Chief Nursing Officer.

"By acting now, we will have better success in retaining the nursing staff we need in the years to come."

Al Martin takes position with Interior Health



It's with regret that I inform you of the resignation of Al Martin as Northern Health's Vice-President of Operational Support Services, effective at the end of June.

In the last year and a half, Al has brought a great deal of knowledge and experience to Northern Health's support functions. He's also been a strong asset in assisting with the broader goals of Northern Health. Al's contributions will be missed.

I am pleased that BC's health sector won't be losing Al altogether. Al will become the new Chief Operating Officer for Interior Health's Thompson-Cariboo Shuswap Health Service Delivery Area at the start of August. Al and his wife Wendy already own a retirement home on Shuswap Lake. This move will bring him much closer to that home, as his office will be located in Kamloops.

By Malcolm Maxwell
Northern Health CEO



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Bone Mineral Densitometer now running in Dawson Creek

Patients throughout the Northeast will now benefit from new equipment to aid in the early detection of osteoporosis.

A \$120,000 bone mineral densitometer is now running at Dawson Creek and District Hospital, funded by the Dawson Creek and District Hospital Foundation, the Peace River Regional Hospital District, and several community donors. This funding has also allowed for additional accessories and renovations to create a brand new "Bone Densitometry Suite" within the hospital.

"We are very pleased to offer Bone Densitometry closer to home for patients in Northeastern BC, and want to thank the groups and individuals who have made it possible" said Dawson Creek and District Hospital Radiologist Dr. LeRoy Erickson. "With our aging population, osteoporosis with the attendant increased risk of fractures is becoming an increasingly common problem in our region. Identification and treatment of those people at risk should lessen the risk for fractures in that group of people."

Bone density measurement is a test to determine the amount of mineral in bones, and provide early detection of osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is most common in post-menopausal women but can also occur in men and people who have certain diseases or take particular medication. Low bone density is a factor that can increase the risk of fractures. Bone density testing can provide valuable information and help



Diagnostic Imaging staff at the Dawson Creek Hospital were busy receiving training in the operation of the new Bone Densitometer. Tracy Isaak, Department Manager, and Technologists, Lee Fast and Jane Dagasso all received extensive training from the company representative which supplied this state-of-the-art piece of equipment. Diane Roy from Tumbler Ridge was delighted to be the first patient to receive this valuable new service in osteoporosis prevention and treatment.

patients decide when hormone or drug treatment may be beneficial.

The Peace River Regional Hospital District provided \$47,000 towards the purchase of the new machine. Donors for the project through the Dawson Creek and District Hospital Foundation include the Mr and Mrs P.A. Woodward's Foundation, the Rotary Club of Dawson Creek, HYDRECS BC (Hydro employees and retirees), and K & P Flooring.

"In the past, people who needed testing of their bone density would have traveled to Prince George, Vancouver, Edmonton, or Grande Prairie to get it," said Larry Tokarchuk, Chief Operating Officer for the Northeast Health Service Delivery Area. "We appreciate the work of community partners and stakeholders in bringing this new equipment to Dawson Creek and the Northeast."

Goodbye to former Northern Interior Regional Health Board Member Teresa Smith

Former Northern Interior Regional Health Board Member Teresa Smith of McBride passed away in late April in Prince George. She was a member of NIRHB from December 2000 until the formation of Northern Health in late 2001.

Teresa was a dedicated and very involved community member. She belonged to a number of volunteer organizations in the Robson Valley that included organizations that her children belonged to and others including health related organizations. While Teresa was on the NIRHB she certainly spoke on behalf of the residents of McBride and area but also made decisions that were of benefit to the entire region. She worked at the McBride Hospital for a time and she and her husband had their own business in McBride.

Teresa was born at Goat River, July 15, 1947 and spent all her life in the Robson Valley. She was married to Don and had three children, Darren (Teri), Dale (Peggy) and Shelly (Darren). She also had three grandsons, Russell, Stephen, and Travis.

By Lorraine Grant
Former Chair
Northern Interior Regional Health Board

Houston Health Centre open on weekends

The Houston Health Centre is now open on weekends.

Starting in May, the clinic will be open on Saturday and Sunday mornings from 8:30am to 12:30, in addition to its Monday to Friday hours of 8:30am to 8:30pm. In September of 2002, Northern Health extended the clinic's hours from eight hours a day on weekdays to 12 hours a day.

A registered nurse will be available during the new hours to provide emergency care for patients in the Houston area. Physicians will

provide on-call support as available.

If you have a non-urgent health question, you're always welcome to speak to a registered nurse through the BC NurseLine. The toll-free number is 1-866-215-4700. Registered nurses are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Deaf or hearing-impaired callers can dial 1-866-889-4700. Translation services are also available on request.

The BC NurseLine also provides pharmacists to answer after-hours medication-related questions between 5pm and 9am.

Contractor named to build replacement facility for Omineca Lodge

Site preparation for the Omineca Lodge replacement facility in Vanderhoof is now underway and work on the new building will begin soon, following the awarding of the construction contract for the new facility.

Yellowridge Construction of Port Moody will build the nearly \$7.5 million new seniors' care facility, funded by the Government of British Columbia, the Stuart-Nechako Regional Hospital District, and Northern Health.

The BC Ministry of Health is providing \$5.8 million to build the Omineca Lodge replacement. The Stuart-Nechako Regional Hospital District is providing \$1.25 million for the project. Northern Health will provide capital funding as well as on-going operational dollars for the facility.

Northern Health is also examining options for the existing Omineca Lodge.



The 18 self-care units in the current lodge will remain as they are now.

There is a strong possibility of developing the existing lodge to provide Independent Living units to offer housing and health services to help Vanderhoof and area seniors remain independent.

The new building will be located at the St. John Hospital site in Vanderhoof. The facility is scheduled for completion in the summer of 2005.

Key contacts across the Northern Health region...

Northern Health Board members and staff are always available to answer your questions and provide you with the information you need.

Our Health Services Administrators and Chief Operating Officers are our key liaisons to our communities on operational issues, and are always happy to speak with you.

The Health Services Administrators in your area are:

- Jennifer Kennedy, Prince Rupert/Queen Charlotte Islands: (250) 624-2171, jennifer.kennedy@northernhealth.ca
- Lorna Ferrari, Terrace/Kitimat/Stewart/Atlin: (250) 638-4021, lorna.ferrari@northernhealth.ca
- Paul Vieira, Hazelton/Smithers/Houston: (250) 847-6202, paul.vieira@northernhealth.ca
- Ray Scott, Lakes/Omineca: (250) 567-2211 extension 14, ray.scott@northernhealth.ca
- John Knoch, Quesnel: (250) 992-0617, john.knoch@northernhealth.ca
- Charles Taylor, Robson Valley: (250) 569-2251, charles.taylor@northernhealth.ca
- Gayle Anton, Mackenzie: (250) 997-3263, gayle.anton@northernhealth.ca

- Marshall Moleschi, Prince George: (250) 565-2573, Marshall.Moleschi@northernhealth.ca

We also have three Chief Operating Officers, who are responsible for the co-ordination of health services delivery in each of our three Health Service Delivery Areas:

Your Chief Operating Officers are:

- Suzanne Johnston, Northwest: (250) 624-2171, suzanne.johnston@northernhealth.ca
- Michael McMillan, Northern Interior: (250) 565-2000, Michael.mcmillan@northernhealth.ca
- Larry Tokarchuk, Northeast: (250) 262-5200, Larry.Tokarchuk@northernhealth.ca

If you have questions of a more regional nature, you are always welcome to call Northern Health's main administration office at (250) 565-2649. Board Chair Harry Gairns and CEO Malcolm Maxwell can also be reached through this number.

For representatives of Aboriginal communities across the region,

Director of Aboriginal Health Katharina Patterson is available to provide any information you may need. She can be reached by calling (250) 565-2949, or by

sending an e-mail to Katharina.patterson@northernhealth.ca

To reach a medical health officer, please call Dr. David Bowering at (250) 565-7424 or e-mail david.bowering@northernhealth.ca, or Dr. Lorna Medd at (250) 565-7461 or lorna.medd@northernhealth.ca

For any other needs, Director of Communications Mark Karjaluo can provide information to you or refer your request to the most appropriate party. Mark's number is (250) 565-2694, or e-mail mark.karjaluo@northernhealth.ca. If your call is urgent, you can also reach Mark by paging (250) 561-6350.

About Northern Directions...

Northern Directions is a monthly update from Northern Health.

If you have any questions or comments about the material you've seen in this edition of Northern Directions, please contact Mark Karjaluo, Director of Communications, at (250) 565-2694 or e-mail mark.karjaluo@northernhealth.ca.

If there is a subject you would like us to focus on in a future edition of Northern Directions, feel free to call or e-mail us.