

**Open House for the Emergency Department – Minor Treatment Unit
at Surrey Memorial Hospital**

**Minister of Health George Abbott
Monday, December 5, 2005**

Check against delivery

Thank you, Barry.

After Surrey Memorial experienced an unfortunate flood back in the spring, I heard this story. Hospital nurses created buttons to show not only their loyalty and commitment to the hospital, but their indomitable spirit as well. That button carried this simple message: Surrey Nurse and Proud of it.

Surrey is one of the fastest-growing cities in Canada, and the Emergency Room in this hospital is one of the nation's busiest. It's important to recognize that throughout the pressure and congestion, this hospital's health professionals and staff have shown their tremendous commitment to the health of this community's people. I assure you, we share your commitment – and improving health care services for the people of Surrey is a top priority for government.

We are here today to mark the first major component of what started out as a promise to the people of Surrey. Back in May, Premier Gordon Campbell told this community that we need to identify the best hospital solution for Surrey, and he acknowledged that you – that we – couldn't afford to wait another year. The Premier promised to fast-track expansion of the hospital's services. At the same time, he said that the best hospital solution needed to be made by local health professionals – based on what's right for patients in Surrey.

Already, earlier this year, recognizing the pressures on Surrey and especially the Emergency Department, government called on Fraser Health to commit \$28 million towards expansion.

Fraser Health has through its 90 day plan already done critical work to relieve congestion at Surrey Memorial Hospital. The 90-Day Plan focused on increasing support for patient and care providers on a wide range of hospital and community health services and is now 95% complete.

We are here today to formally mark the realization of this planned approach – the opening of the new Minor Treatment Unit.

Keith Anderson has provided details already on the 4,000 square foot Minor Treatment Unit. While the new treatment unit is a key component of the 90 Day Plan, other activities have been important – they include:

- Eight new emergency stretchers to increase the ER's capacity to care for acutely ill patients;
- Expansion of in-patient bed capacity and intensive care unit ventilator capacity for critically ill patients. This will help to reduce congestion in the emergency room.
- Additional residential care beds, hospice beds and home care support to improve hospital patient flow, creating greater acute care capacity.

Today's open house demonstrates the immediate approach to easing congestion in the emergency department. However, there is more work to be done.

In May 2005, Premier Campbell asked Fraser Health to fast-track plans to meet Surrey's health services requirements – for now and the future. Fraser Health was directed to provide a report by Oct. 31, 2005. In response to the Premier's request, the Surrey Memorial Health Services Capacity Initiative was launched.

The report was delivered on schedule after extensive planning and consultation with experts from around the world as well as local physicians, hospital staff, the Surrey community and the Surrey Memorial Hospital Foundation. Staff at the Ministry of Health took the time to carefully review and consider the full implications of this report. I am pleased today to make the report publicly available. Copies of the report will be handed out later as well as posted on the Ministry website and the Fraser Health website.

The report is the first chapter in a modern, forward-looking blueprint that will shape delivery of health care for the people of Surrey over the next 15 years. The recommendations are based on a comprehensive review of best practices in emergency, acute and outpatient care. The report identifies current pressure areas. The recommendations reflect the possibilities outlined by Premier Campbell in May of this year.

The government has reviewed and endorsed the course of action proposed by Fraser Health Authority. The recommendations are:

- A new state-of-the-art emergency and urgent care facility built on the Surrey Memorial site. Construction is projected to start in 2008 and complete in 2010. The new facility will triple existing floor space and provide specialized mental health and geriatric units.
- A new 148,000 square foot day surgery hospital to provide day surgery and a wide array of outpatient care. Several locations are being considered with construction expected to start in 2007 and complete in 2009. The majority of outpatient services currently in Surrey Memorial will relocate to the new facility, freeing up a significant amount of space in the hospital for inpatient care.

- Ambulatory care is more and more the way our patients receive care – it does not require an admission overnight to hospital and includes many surgical procedures, many of which used to be done only in an inpatient setting; it also includes most diagnostic services, many non-surgical treatment interventions, management of chronic diseases, and rehabilitation.
- An example of activities which will be relocated in the new Ambulatory Centre include an “express diagnostic service” to provide high volume quick turnaround diagnostic services such as routine blood and urine collection, EKGs, chest X-rays and simple bone X-rays with minimal waits for patients.
- A new primary care clinic to provide family practice services, multi-disciplinary care and chronic disease management will also be located in the new ambulatory care facility.
- The recommendations also include a new perinatal care facility, to be built as new space on the Surrey Memorial site above the new emergency facility. This program reflects the needs of the large numbers of young families in Surrey who are raising their young children.
- Renovations to reclaimed space at Surrey Memorial will be an important aspect of this exciting plan. This will create more renal stations and about 140 additional acute care beds, including:
 - five critical care beds,
 - 13 Level II bassinets for special care infants, and
 - 11 Level III bassinets for critically ill infants.
 - Around 62 of the additional acute beds and the five critical beds will be in place by the end of 2007.

This is a very significant project and Government is committed to working with the Fraser Health authority and the Surrey Memorial Foundation to ensure that the needed resources are available

One of the next steps is to confirm the location of the new ambulatory care facility – there are a number of options, all of which have advantages and disadvantages. Fraser Health will also be providing us with a more detailed costing analysis of the options in the report.

I must thank the Board of Fraser Health for their hard work and dedication in serving the people of this rapidly growing, culturally diverse region. Chair Barry Forbes has made an outstanding contribution to the improvement of health care delivery in this region for the past four years. He and his team have transformed health care in the Fraser and built an excellent foundation for continued improvement.

Barry is stepping down from his position this month. I want to take this opportunity to thank Barry for his incredible contribution over the past 4 years. The commitment required of our Health Authority Board Chairs is very significant – Barry has presided over change and growth which has been unprecedented in this region of the province. His dedication and commitment are very much appreciated.

I would also like to take the chance to thank his “home” organization – the Richmond Credit Union – which has allowed him the time from their business to serve his community in the important role of chair of the health authority. I understand how difficult it is for organizations to share their leaders’ time in these critical governance roles in the public sector. We are very appreciative of this contribution to the health of our citizens.

Today, I am very pleased to announce that I have asked Keith Purchase, the current Chair of the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority to take on the role of Chair in the Fraser. Keith is nearing the end of his term with Vancouver Coastal. He has made a tremendous contribution in that authority. He is keen to continue making a contribution in the health sector. Keith brings a strong familiarity with the Fraser Valley – he has had a long history as a volunteer with the YMCA in the Valley – having lead the capital campaign for the new Surrey “Y”.

Together, Fraser and Vancouver Coastal health authorities serve about 60 per cent of BC’s population. They have many important interfaces and strengthening the relationships between the two authorities will be critical as we work to optimize services for our public in the lower mainland. I believe that both regions will benefit from the strong relationships at the governance level that this appointment will bring.

This is a very exciting day for the community of Surrey. The plan we have released today is a contemporary and forward looking one and will provide this community with modern state of the art facilities to meet the needs of patients seeking care at Surry Memorial. Surrey will continue to grow and we will need to continue to work to ensure our decisions across the whole FHA over the coming years will address the growth of this part of the region.

None of this would have been possible without the time, commitment and involvement of nurses, physicians, other staff and those working in management – this plan reflects your commitment to serving the community of Surrey. I would like to thank you for all your hard work and dedication and I look forward to working with you in the months and years to come.