
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health Services

\$2.2 MILLION TO ADVANCE NORTHERN HEALTH CARE

PRINCE GEORGE – Government is investing \$2.2 million in response to a report containing recommendations promoting the success of the Northern Medical Program and making Prince George a centre of excellence in rural and remote health care.

Health Services Minister Colin Hansen made the announcement today during a visit to the University of Northern British Columbia. The \$2.2 million will pay for treating more patients in the north who previously would have had to be treated outside of the region.

“We appreciate the work of the Northern Medical Program Community Action Group members who produced the report and who made it a real community effort,” said Hansen. “Government is redesigning B.C.’s health care system so that more northern patients will be able to receive the treatment they need within their own region. A joint task group is already working with representatives from the Northern Health Authority and the Northern Medical Program to review the report and consider next steps.”

The UNBC Northern Medical Program Community Action Group, chaired by Prince George Mayor Colin Kinsley, wrote the report ‘Building for the Future of Health Care in Northern B.C.’. The group comprises local representatives from the Northern Health Authority, community leaders from across the north, medical professionals and academics.

“This report is a blueprint for an exciting new direction in Northern health services,” said Kinsley. “Thank you to all members of the community action group for their dedication in preparing the report and we look forward to working with the Joint Task Group in making the Northern Medical Program a vibrant reality.”

The report focuses on the recruitment and retention of core clinicians and on making Prince George and the northern region a centre of excellence in rural and remote health care and health education. Additional recommendations include:

- Developing educational leadership opportunities and providing academic support;
- Improving appropriate use of hospital care in the north;
- Providing health care career opportunities.

“In addition to supporting better health care in the North through the Northern Medical Program, we are also targeting 15 new student spaces at UNBC to train nurse practitioners,” said Advanced Education Minister Shirley Bond. “Nurse practitioners will have the advanced skills needed to deliver much-needed high-quality health services.

“As people often choose to work near where they train, educating doctors and nurse practitioners in Northern B.C. will improve recruitment and retention of health care professionals in the north.”

“The recommendations brought forward by this action group will help develop a successful and sustainable medical program in the North that will benefit both health care professionals and local patients,” said Prince George North MLA Pat Bell.

As part of its New Era commitment, the government promised to strengthen rural health care through the recruitment and retention of health care professional in northern and rural communities. The Northern Medical Program is part of the government’s commitment to increase the number of medical school graduates over five years. Through a collaborative training model involving UBC, UNBC and UVic, the number of first year medical school spaces will almost double by 2005/06.

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