
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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NH Board Meeting highlighted by Northern Cancer Control Strategy presentation

Northern Health held its December board meeting in Prince George today. Highlights of the agenda included a presentation on the Northern Cancer Control Strategy, motions related to hospital replacements, Aboriginal Health and H1N1 updates, and the latest budget projections.

The NH Board heard from Dr. Ronald Chapman, Executive Director of the Northern Cancer Control Strategy, about a number of exciting initiatives that are under way. Among them, a newly launched, cutting-edge recruitment campaign for Oncologists. The campaign is centered on a web site (www.northerncancerteam.ca/) with a strong multi-media component. The web site is supported through print postcards, face to face interaction, personal connections, and an advertising initiative. The recruitment strategy is an essential element of planning for the opening of the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North.

"It seems that weekly I am introduced to new initiatives that are improving the network of Cancer Control services across the region." added Dr. Charles Jago, Northern Health Board Chair. "The Oncologist recruitment project is particularly innovative and is essential as we establish a Cancer Centre in the North and build the capacity to treat cancer in our region. ."

Dr. Chapman also provided an update on the status of H1N1 around the Northern Health region. NH's experience with the pandemic strain of the flu virus was similar to that of other regions of Canada, including the declining trends noted recently. He also pointed out that information would soon be available on how vaccinations can be accessed in the New Year.

"H1N1 followed trends very similar to what happened elsewhere" said Dr. Chapman. "In addition, as we expected, serious cases were almost always associated with people who had underlying health issues."

Dr. Suzanne Johnston, Chief Nursing Officer and VP Academic Affairs, introduced the Aboriginal Health Service Plan and its relation to the new Northern Health Strategic Plan. Highlights included the establishment of seven Aboriginal Health Improvement Committees (AHIC). These groups work at the community level to ensure that planning and implementation of primary care initiatives are developed in cooperation with First Nations.

"Through these teams we can work with First Nations to create primary care relationships that meet their needs" said Dr. Johnston. "By sharing in the development of health initiatives people can achieve better outcomes for themselves and their families."

The NH Board meeting also saw two motions submitted that relate to capital projects. The motions support the process of developing full implementation plans, in collaboration with the Stuart Nechako Regional Hospital District and the North West Regional Hospital District, for the replacement of the Lakes District Hospital in Burns Lake and the Queen Charlotte Islands General Hospital on Haida Gwaii. The passing of these motions is an important hurdle in moving forward the critical planning path for the development of new facilities.

Finally, the Northern Health Board heard from Chief Financial Officer Shawn Terlson who reported a deficit of \$919 thousand for the current reporting period. Terlson noted that most of the deficit can be traced to operational costs related to H1N1 and changes in how funds flow to Northern Health from the Ministry of Health on the Ft St John Hospital & Residential Care replacement project. Northern Health is working through a number of initiatives aimed at providing solutions to the current budget challenges and is still working towards a balanced budget to end the 2009-2010 fiscal year.

“Despite the pressures on the health system, we continue to look at our capital needs and plan for the future” adds Cathy Ulrich, CEO. “We are, and will continue to be, leaders in innovative health practices while we work hard to achieve a balanced budget at years end.”

The next regular meeting of the NH Board will take place on February 15/16 2010 in Valemount.

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