



# Stabilizing health-care services in North Vancouver Island

## One year since Minister Dix's Announcement

This week marks an exciting milestone as it has been one year since Minister Dix announced that the provincial government was taking action to stabilize and improve access to reliable health-care services in North Vancouver Island by providing approximately \$30 million in one-time capital and ongoing operating funding.

Since that time, a number of significant milestones have been achieved, front-line staff have continued to deliver high quality care, and most importantly, patients and families continue to benefit from these endeavours.

While we still have much work to do, these achievements would have not been possible without the dedication, professionalism and exceptional work of all of our local staff, area leadership and community partners.

Here are some of the many highlights from the past year:

- The construction of the Mobile CT pad at the Port Hardy Hospital began in August, was completed in November, and in December the Mobile CT was delivered and patients started receiving scans on-site, limiting the need for long-distance travel to Campbell River or beyond (see photos below).
  - Of note, Island Health was recognized by BC Hydro as a Clean Energy Champion for construction of the mobile CT scanner pad, which allows the CT scanner to be powered by electricity rather than diesel.
- Increased capacity and front line staff including:
  - Ten Registered Nurses/Registered Psychiatric Nurses
  - Eight Licensed Practical Nurses (one hired from outside of the region)
  - Two Registered Nurse Clinical Coordinators (one hired from outside the region)
  - One Clinical Pharmacist
  - Two Pharmacy Technicians
  - Four Community Health Workers
  - Ten Protection Services Officers
  - Two Social Workers (one hired from outside the region)
  - Twenty-Six Patient Care Aides
  - Four Mental Health Workers
  - Three Medical Lab Assistants
  - Two Midwives
  - One Practice Ready Assessment (PRA) physician
- Purchased two custom 7-seat wheelchair-enabled shuttles to support the new North Vancouver Island shuttle service. Since rolling out in April 2023, 564 patients and support people and 78 staff have been transported by a dedicated team of drivers.
- Completed renderings for expansion and updates to Port Hardy and Port McNeill hospitals. Anticipated construction timeline for the modernization phase will begin in Fall 2024, with estimated completion in 2027. This timeline will be influenced by contractor availability and supply chain.



- Hired an Indigenous Patient Navigator to support patients and families from the North Island area.
- Two Blanket Exercises and two debriefing sessions were conducted in Port Hardy to provide opportunity for local staff to engage in a facilitated, experiential activity exploring the 500-year relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.
- Entered into a new housing partnership with the 'Namgis First Nation - through the 'Namgis Business Development Corporation (NBDC) - aimed at providing temporary housing for health-care workers on Cormorant Island while they find their own accommodation (see photo below).
- Two additional long-term care beds added at Eagle Ridge Manor.
- The Salvation Army, an Island Health contracted provider, added six sobering and assessment beds (for a total of 12) at its Port Hardy Centre of Hope site, and expanded services to 24/7.
- Rolled out the TELUS MedAccess Electronic Medical Record at the Port Hardy Community Health Clinic and Sointula Health Centre to support improved continuity of care and to support a virtual care prototype initiatives.
- Temporary Recruitment and Retention Bonuses and salary incentives for North Vancouver Island Staff were introduced by the Ministry- these temporary measures were recently extended and under the Ministry's Health Human Resources Plan, a provincial approach to these incentives continues to be developed and will be introduced in the future.
- Began working with GoHealthBC, an innovative Northern Health initiative that helps to address staffing challenges at rural and remote sites, such as those in North Vancouver Island. Since March 2023, 27 GoHealthBC nurses have been deployed to sites in NVI.
- Developed the Rural Emergency Department Education Program (REDEP), which will provide Emergency Department training to NVI staff at the Port McNeill hospital, keeping them in community for up to 90% of the training time.

Thank you again for your partnership and collaboration as we continue working together to carry out this important work.

If you have any questions or would like more information regarding any of the initiatives and progress outlined in this newsletter, please don't hesitate to contact us, as we would be more than happy to discuss further.

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**To learn more please visit:**

[North Vancouver Island Sustainability Initiative](#)

[Island Health Magazine - Spring 2023](#)

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The new mobile CT scanner unit inside the trailer parked on the mobile CT pad.



The mobile CT scanner trailer parked on the pad at PHH



Exterior view and Interior views of 'Namgis House on Cormorant Island