



# COMMUNITY UPDATE

*The latest from Northern Health*

**December 2023**

Welcome to the Northern Health community update! Stay connected as we bring you monthly updates and valuable insight into health care in the North.

## **Organization and community news**

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### **Integrated primary, community care facility coming to Vanderhoof**

People in Vanderhoof will benefit from improved primary and community health care with the approval of a new integrated primary-care and community health services facility to open in 2025.

To establish a fully integrated primary and community care model, physicians and nurse practitioners practising at the Omineca Medical Clinic will be co-located with the Northern Health interprofessional teams in a new facility on the St. John Hospital Campus.

Upon completion of detailed design and procurement processes, construction of the new Vanderhoof primary-care and community health services centre is expected to begin in the fall of 2024. The new facility will be located on land occupied by the old College of New Caledonia hospital building, which will be removed in early 2024.

For more info, read the full BC Gov News release: "[Integrated primary, community care facility coming to Vanderhoof.](#)"

### **New long-term care home coming to Prince George**

More people in Prince George will have access to long-term care as Providence Living and Northern Health prepare to build a new care home with 200 beds.

Providence and Northern Health have signed an agreement to build a long-term care home that will add 200 beds in Prince George at 6500 Southridge Ave. Providence, in partnership with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Prince George, is contributing the land. This is the first new long-term care facility to be built in Prince George in 15 years.

Providence will build and operate the long-term care home in partnership with Northern Health. The first step will be the design phase followed by the procurement phase that will identify contractors for the design and construction, which is expected to start in fall 2024.

For more info, read the full BC Gov News release: "[New long-term care home coming to Prince George.](#)"

### **Northern Health Connections modified holiday schedule**

The Northern Health Connections program will run on a modified schedule starting December 23, leading up to an annual holiday and maintenance break that takes place each year at this time.

NH Connections provides transportation for clients travelling to non-emergent health services outside their home communities. A variety of routes connect communities across Northern BC, along with service to Vancouver. Demand for the service typically drops over the holiday season as fewer people book health care appointments.

Starting December 23, NH Connections buses will begin their last routes for 2023. Regular routes will resume the week of January 2, 2024. For more information on specific route dates, and booking centre holiday hours of operation [visit our website](#).

### **Dawson Creek & District Hospital (DCDH) Replacement Project**

Work is continuing to progress well on the site of the new DCDH. The [second tower crane](#) was installed – Check out this [timelapse video](#) of the installation process. Concrete is continuing to be poured and [Graham Design Builders is prepping the site for winter](#) and implementing their frost protection plan.

Many residents have been wondering [what's going to happen to the current facility](#) once the new one opens. Read more about Northern Health's plans for the current facility on [Let's Talk DCDH](#).

Start your journey with Northern Health at the newest hospital in the Northeast! There are a number of positions available at the current and future hospital ranging from health care to support services. [Download a copy of the DCDH Employment Flyer](#) for more information or to share with your extended network.

### **Stuart Lake Hospital Replacement - Fort St. James, BC - November 2023: Quarterly Update**

As you've no doubt seen, this summer has been a flurry of construction activity on the new Stuart Lake Hospital. We've seen walls go up, roads paved, and a building come to life. The new hospital is now fully enclosed, and the work has shifted to items such as interior wall steel studs, backing and boarding, electrical, IT infrastructure, fire protection, and more. [Continue reading on our project website](#).

## Appropriate use of the emergency department and options for accessing health care

Emergency rooms in the North are under increasing strain. Help take the pressure off the doctors and nurses that serve our communities by seeking care through these options, when you can:

- Call your family care provider
- Visit an urgent primary care centre or primary care clinic if one is available in your community
- Check out [HealthLinkBC.ca](https://www.healthlinkbc.ca) or speak to a nurse at 8-1-1
- Talk to your local pharmacist about their expanded services [Book an appointment with a pharmacist.](#)
- Book an appointment with the [Northern Health Virtual Clinic](#) at 1-844-645-7811
- Call 1-855-344-3800 to book an appointment with the [First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day](#)

For life-threatening emergencies like chest pains, difficulty breathing, broken bones, or severe bleeding, the ER is the place to be. For more information, please visit our [service interruptions page](#).

## Northern Health Stories highlights

The [Northern Health Stories site](#) is a great place to read about what's going on in Northern Health – people, places, projects, and more! Here are some recent highlights:

- [Holiday donations: How can you best support your local food bank?](#)
- [From volunteer to career: Celebrating International Volunteer Day](#)
- [International Day of Persons with Disabilities - December 3](#)
- [Dried blood spot testing: An easier way to test for certain infections](#)
- [Holiday giving: Thinking outside the \(gift\)box](#)
- [Stuart Nechako Manor recreation bus – adventure awaits!](#)
- [Diabetes: More than just blood sugar](#)
- [NH in-house security program launches in Terrace and Prince Rupert](#)
- [Conference connections at the 5th Northern Perinatal Conference](#)
- [Métis Health Gathering offers powerful opportunity to share and learn](#)
- [Transgender Awareness Week is November 13-19](#)
- [Award of Excellence presented to UHNBC MRI Technologist Heather Harms](#)
- [Experience nursing and earn money before you graduate with the Employed Student Nurse Program](#)
- [OT Jayme Peel thriving in Prince Rupert](#)

## Ministry of Health highlights

Including highlights from the [Ministry of Health](#) and [Ministry of Mental Health & Addictions](#) that are of interest to all BC residents:

- [Province expands health-care workforce and increases patient access](#)

- [Relational security officers foster safer workplaces for health-care workers](#)
- [Respiratory illness immunization campaign off to a good start](#)
- [Ministers' statement on updates on battle against opioid manufacturers, distributors](#)

## Public Health

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### Naloxone Decision-Making: An Important Guide

Navigating the complexities of the unregulated drug supply, especially with the presence of non-opioid sedatives like benzodiazepines, poses challenges for responders in determining when to administer naloxone. The Towards the Heart infographic serves as a valuable tool for people responding to drug poisoning, aiding in the decision-making process around naloxone administration. By providing clear guidance, this resource ensures that people receive the necessary naloxone promptly to reverse opioid poisoning, while also preventing unnecessary administrations in cases where it may not be needed.

To access the infographic, please click [here](#).

## Overdose prevention and response

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### Toxic drug alert: Prince George – November 3, 2023

There has been an increase in overdoses in the community of Prince George linked to dark purple drug sold as “down”. This substance is causing slow, irregular breathing needing naloxone despite being awake. Individuals are requiring continued monitoring and encouragement to breathe. Population & Public Health has issued a toxic drug alert for the community of Prince George. Please distribute broadly to those who would benefit from this information.

### Fort St. John Overdose Prevention Site and Warming Centre services – new location – December 2023

Overdose Prevention Site (OPS) and Warming Centre services have begun at the new Fort St. John Health Services Centre, located at 10067 100th Ave. Hours of operation are Monday to Friday, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm (these hours may be subject to change on stat holidays).

The following services are based at the location, at this time:

- Indoor substance use space, enclosed outdoor inhalation area, referrals to treatment options and harm reduction services.
- Warming centre – a warm, safe space to come during the day, with hot food and drinks available.
- Staff will include registered nurses, mental health and substance use clinicians, life skills workers and others.

For more information, visit our [website](#). To sign up for text-based drug alerts for Northern Health and other health regions, text **JOIN** to 253787