
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health Services

PRINCE GEORGE HOSPITAL RENAMED TO REFLECT TEACHING ROLE

PRINCE GEORGE – Health Services Minister Kevin Falcon today announced that Prince George Regional Hospital will be renamed The University Hospital of Northern British Columbia, Prince George.

“Over the last five years, the role of the hospital has changed significantly through our investments in academic development, teaching, learning and research in Northern Health,” said Falcon. “The new name better reflects the current role of the hospital as the main teaching site for the Northern Medical Program.”

The Northern Medical Program welcomed its first students in 2004 and in May 2008, graduated its first students. The delivery of the Northern Medical Program is a partnership between the University of British Columbia (UBC), the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), and Northern Health. It is an integral part of the expansion of UBC’s Faculty of Medicine. The goal of the program is to train physicians in the north for rural and northern practice.

“Training students and keeping them in Northern B.C. is critical to improving our health outcomes and providing quality care no matter where you live in B.C.,” said Prince George-Valemount MLA Shirley Bond. “This name change responds to a direct request from our doctors and health care providers to reflect the significant progress that has been made and to more accurately describe the role of our regional hospital.”

“This expansion for medical education in the north is providing unique opportunities and benefits for many northern communities including Prince George in terms of education, research and health services,” said Prince George-Mackenzie MLA Pat Bell. “The renaming is a physical change to capture all that we have achieved in the past five years.”

The northern medical program and Northern Health Sciences Centre support the expanded health-related research activity at UNBC, and is supporting the North to emerge as a national centre for rural health care teaching and research. In addition to providing overall medical education, the northern medical program will address special issues for northern communities, including aboriginal health.

“We’ve seen significant expansion of nursing education programs, the development of nurse practitioner programs and the advent of the northern medical program,” said Dr. Charles Jago, Northern Health board chair. “The change in name to The University Hospital of Northern British Columbia signals that this emerging educational culture will be sustained and further developed into the future.”

The request to rename the hospital was initiated by the Northern Medical Society of BC.

“The Northern Medical Program is the result of the prescription issued by the people of the north and the new name captures the spirit of their intent,” said Dr. Bert Kelly, executive director of the Northern Medical Society of BC. “The provincial government and UNBC should be commended for delivering this critical program to the North in an astonishingly short time. It will bring benefits for generations to come.”

The province expanded the UBC medical school to university campuses in Victoria and Prince George. Another medical program located in Kelowna is underway – the Southern Medical Program – and is expected to accept students in 2011 and open at UBC Okanagan in January 2012. When this expansion is fully implemented, UBC will graduate 288 doctors each year, up from 128 in 2001.

A plaque will be unveiled in the near future to mark the official name change to the University Hospital of Northern British Columbia, Prince George.

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