

Press Release

Date: February 23, 2022



For Immediate Release

Resumption of service announcement in the Interior Health region

The BC Rural Health Network (BCRHN) has been monitoring the developments and impacts of COVID-19 on our healthcare system throughout rural BC. Feedback from our membership in the Interior and announcements made by the Interior Health Authority (IHA) on January 18th, led to a series of meetings with the senior executive and management team at IHA. During these meetings the concerns forwarded by members and the public at large were discussed and all involved recognized the need to restore services in all communities.

The BCRHN was delighted to hear that as of Friday February 18, 2022, a plan has been initiated to restore services in all communities affected by the January 18th announcement. This information is welcome news to the impacted communities; however, restricted services will continue to impact the communities of Ashcroft and New Denver. These two communities remain impacted due to pre-existing staff shortages and levels that had made regular scheduled hours impossible to maintain. Additional staff is needed in these communities to resume full operations.

The BCRHN is pleased that additional staff have been successfully recruited to several of the impacted communities:

- Two new registered nurses have been recruited to Lillooet and inpatient services will reopen on Mar. 14;
- One new registered nurse has been recruited to Clearwater and inpatient services to reopen on Feb. 23;
- Nurse provided primary care services at the Barriere and District Health Centre will return to normal on Feb. 23;

“While staffing is not stable enough to safely restore all services next week, we are pleased to take initial steps and resume non-urgent elective surgeries for people throughout Interior Health. We will be rescheduling postponed procedures to catch up with the backlog as quickly as possible,” stated Susan Brown (IHA, CEO) on February 18, 2022.

Colin Moss (VP BCRHN) commented “We look forward to continuing the discussions we have initiated with Ms. Brown and the IHA team. I, as a Village Councillor in New Denver, am disappointed, but appreciate the challenges of recruitment in rural BC. We will continue to work alongside the IHA to improve services throughout the region.” He added, “The BCRHN will continue to ensure that rural service resumption remains a priority for the Province and for all health authorities.” Mr. Moss believes the relationship between health authorities and rural residents must be rebuilt to create clear communications between all parties and is pleased this has begun. He concluded, “Ms. Brown has demonstrated the IHA’s desire to improve communication with rural residents and we welcome that! Much work is still to be done but these latest recruitments of Registered Nurses is a step in the right direction.”

The BCRHN is the healthcare voice of the rural residents of British Columbia and seeks better health outcomes for all people, through solutions-based approaches with governments, and information provision to residents.

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All Media Inquiries: Paul Adams paul.bcrhn@gmail.com