

Press Release

Date: February 24, 2022

For Immediate Release



Investment in British Columbia Nurses is Welcome News

The BC Rural Network (BCRHN) commends Minister Adrian Dix and the BC Government for a critical investment into nursing in BC in the creation of 602 new seats in post secondary nurse training. Nursing levels in BC have increased over the past several years but the demand has continued to exceed the supply of staff available. The additional pressure on resources responding to the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the problems across Canada with health care provider shortages, especially nurses and physicians.

“The number of nurse increases in B.C. is faster than anywhere else but the demands on nurses are increasing, I think it’s fair to say, even more. And so (there’s) a need to invest in the future,” Dix said.

The Administrator for the BCRHN, Paul Adams, says members and the public have been reaching out about service closures and service reductions in rural BC. These reduced services are due to nursing and staff shortages. “My inbox has been filling up with concerns. Don’t forget about rural BC is the common thread of these messages,” says Adams. “We see closures of facilities in small towns to provide personnel to larger centres. We see isolated elderly and vulnerable residents having to travel hours for basic medical services. It is not that these situations are always avoidable, but we must guarantee that the future trained nurses are placed to ensure all British Columbians receive equity in care. Hopefully, some of these seats can look to be filled with student nurses that have an interest in rural practice. Bursaries and scholarships for rural students would be a welcome move.”

Leonard Casley is the Acting Vice President of the BCRHN, and the Mayor of New Denver. His community health facilities have been on reduced hours of operation since January 18th and has been understaffed for many years. “Our community continues to struggle with staffing levels as do many other small rural communities. Cuts made in rural BC are difficult to regain and we must remain engaged with the authorities to ensure service does resume. Our challenges go beyond simply recruiting people, we face challenges with job security for interested candidates. If you are going to make a move and relocate to somewhere rural, you want to know that you will have security in your job, for your future, for your family. Contracts with our healthcare professionals need to span multiple years and provide security to those interested in coming.” Stated Casley.

The BCRHN has been listening to the concerns across BC from their membership and the public at large and remain actively engaged in ensuring resumption of service occurs to pre-pandemic levels and rural interests are present in the conversations around healthcare in BC. “I see these new seats as a much-needed step to bringing the healthcare staffing and service levels to a sustainable level. In the meantime, we need to continue to monitor the situation on the ground for communities like New Denver and Ashcroft. These communities, as with others, have been understaffed for many years and continue to be understaffed today. I am hopeful that a new focus is coming on equity in healthcare and health outcomes for all British Columbians.” Mayor Casley concluded.

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.

--30--

Media Inquiries to paul.bcrhn@gmail.com