



NEWS RELEASE

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B.C. Women's Hospital Fellowship offers unique maternity training for health care providers in rural B.C.

Vancouver, B.C. – Today, B.C. Minister of Health Services Colin Hansen and Provincial Health Services Authority President and CEO Lynda Cranston announced the first recipient of B.C. Women's Hospital and Health Centre's new Advanced Maternity Fellowship for Rural Practitioners. Women's is an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority,

The first Fellowship will provide training for a group of nine registered nurses from the hospitals serving the Mount Waddington area in Northern Vancouver Island, a rural and remote area where the specialized skills will go far to keep births closer to home.

"This is great news for expectant mothers in the heartlands of our province, who will have access to specialized services as a result of this fellowship program," said Hansen. "Advanced training in maternity care will help our caregivers address some of the unique challenges of providing health care in rural settings. I congratulate everyone who was involved in making this initiative a reality."

With the closest hospital many miles away, or stretches of snowy highway between a labouring mother and medical help, births in rural communities across B.C. often occur without the broad safety net that exists in major urban centres. Practitioners in these communities must have an extensive knowledge base paired with specialized skills. Through its new Advanced Maternity Fellowship for Rural Practitioners, Women's will help provide rural caregivers with these important tools.

"Women's is a resource for the whole province. That's why we are thrilled with the opportunity to provide support for practitioners in all parts of B.C., and to ensure that women and their infants continue to get the care they need as close to their homes as possible," said Dr. Elizabeth Whynot, President of B.C. Women's Hospital and Health Centre. "When we asked rural practitioners directly what we, as leaders in women's health, could do to help, training was the number one response across the board."

The Fellowship was established as part of Women's provincial mandate to provide competent maternity care to women across the province. It offers maternity care practitioners in rural and small urban B.C. communities intensive training in advanced maternity skills. These practitioners include family physicians, registered nurses, and midwives or other allied health care providers.

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“PHSA is committed to providing province-wide solutions and better health for British Columbians,” explained Cranston. “Innovative initiatives such as the Women’s Advanced Maternity Fellowship will go far to ensure we are providing the best health care possible, not only in urban centres such as Vancouver, but in communities throughout B.C.”

BC Women’s Hospital and Health Centre Foundation was instrumental in bringing together funding partners for this Fellowship including Weyerhaeuser, Bank of Montreal, Bell Canada, Provincial Health Services Authority, and the Interior Health Authority. Together these sponsors have committed almost \$400,000 to support the Fellowship for the next five years. This relatively small investment will benefit mothers, babies, and health care workers in rural areas for many years.

“We would like to express our immense gratitude to our partners Weyerhaeuser, Bank of Montreal, and Bell Canada,” said Women’s Foundation Chair Betsy Gibbons. “Their support and the generous contributions of our individual donors have made this Fellowship possible and enabled Women’s to meet the unique health needs of women in rural B.C.”

Together with Women’s, the following partners will provide the training support for the Mount Waddington area nurses and for future recipients of the Fellowship: University of British Columbia, British Columbia’s Institute of Technology, and the British Columbia Reproductive Care Program.

Women’s recognizes women’s health as unique and is leading the way in a new approach to women’s health care. Women’s is the only hospital and health centre in B.C. dedicated to providing specialized services to meet the unique health needs of women throughout life: from childbirth to midlife through senior years. Women’s is the leading maternity hospital in Canada, with more than 7,000 babies delivered each year. It is a vital resource for complicated births and B.C.’s centre for high-risk pregnancies. Women’s is also engaged in the exploration of women’s unique health issues through woman-centred research and innovation.

For more information about how you can support Women’s Foundation, or to learn more about the Advanced Maternity Fellowship for Rural Practitioners, visit www.womensfoundation.ca.

Media Contact:

Marisa Nichini
Director, Public Affairs & Communications
B.C. Women’s Hospital and Health Centre,
an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority
604-875-2301