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A PLAN TO SUSTAIN MT. WADDINGTON HEALTH SERVICES

The Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) recognizes community concerns around access to, and availability of, health care services in Mt. Waddington.

VIHA met with local physicians, local governments, the Mt. Waddington Health Network and other stakeholders in Fall 2011. Together we agreed to a community-led plan to strengthen and stabilize health services in Mt. Waddington, including the Port Hardy Hospital Emergency Department.

During both public and private meetings, VIHA has made it clear there are no plans to close the Port Hardy Emergency Department and that every effort will be made to provide physician coverage. The Port Hardy Emergency Department will be open other than when clinicians are unavailable to work.

A Local Working Group (LWG), comprised of community, First Nations, physician and VIHA representatives, has been established and has to date held nine meetings. Information on the LWG, including Terms of Reference, membership and meeting agendas and minutes can be viewed on the VIHA website, http://www.viha.ca/about_viha/community/mt_waddington.htm The LWG submitted its report and recommendations to VIHA on May 2, 2012.

Components of the plan include:

- Increasing focus on physician recruitment making Mt. Waddington a priority for international medical graduates, working with medical schools to develop Family Practice Resident programs and other recruitment initiatives. One new physician, who is currently a Resident at the St. Paul's IMG Program, has successfully been recruited to Port Hardy for July 2012. A new physician will arrive in Port McNeill later this year.
- Strengthening strategies for recruitment and retention of registered nurses to Mt. Waddington communities as well as other health care providers such as lab/x-ray technicians and physiotherapy.
- Recruitment of an Aboriginal Health nurse liaison that will provide services at Port Hardy and Port McNeill hospital sites. Following a recruitment process, this position was filled in January 2012.

- Developing strategies to ensure potential and newly recruited-physicians to Mt. Waddington communities feel welcome and that their work/life balance is respected.
- Adding a full-time social worker to work at the three Mt. Waddington acute care sites. Following a recruitment process, this position was filled and the social worker began work at the three sites on November 18, 2012.
- Explore development of a role for nurse practitioners at Port Hardy Hospital, including in the Emergency Department. The LWG established a nurse practitioner working group that looked at developing the role of the NP to improve access to primary care in the community working with physicians and as part of an interdisciplinary team. In mid April, two new nurse practitioner positions for Port Hardy were posted on the VIHA website. We anticipate these positions will be filled in the near future. The two new positions are in addition to the two NPs already providing primary health care services in the community
- Increasing admitting clerk coverage at Port Hardy and Port McNeill Hospitals to include evenings, weekends and statutory holidays, giving nursing staff more time to look after patients. Admitting clerk coverage is now increased at the two sites.
- Explore expansion of telehealth services in Mt. Waddington to improve access to care and specialists.
- Reducing pressure on emergency departments and on physicians by improving access to primary care by working toward the goal of creating a single location where physicians, nurse practitioners and other health care providers would work together in a team environment to provide care and manage illness. Individuals would be seen by the practitioner most appropriate to their health needs, meaning they would not necessarily always be seen by a physician.
- Developing strategies to support individuals living in Mt. Waddington communities to be responsible for their own health and wellbeing and to make healthy choices.
- Continuing annual funding totaling \$60,000 to the Mt. Waddington Health Network via a contract with the Mt. Waddington Regional Hospital District.

VIHA and the LWG are committed to keeping residents informed throughout this collaborative process to stabilize and enhance health services in Mt. Waddington.