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Updates on KGH pediatrics unit and CEO leadership transition

KELOWNA, BC – Interior Health (IH) remains committed to reopening the Kelowna General Hospital (KGH) pediatric in-patient unit as soon as possible. We are pleased to announce four new physicians have signed offers to join the department. However, at this time, IH does not have the required number of pediatricians available to safely re-open the 10-bed inpatient unit. We continue to work towards resuming services and will provide timely updates to the community.

Several key actions have been taken by the board of directors, senior executive team and KGH medical leadership to reopen the department as soon as possible. These actions include:

- Continued collaboration with the medical staff association and Doctors of BC through an established joint action committee to develop a comprehensive plan to address the staffing challenges and stabilize services over the long term.
- Appointing a neutral, third-party facilitator as soon as possible to make recommendations to the IH board of directors on further actions to support strengthening pediatric services at KGH.
- Susan Brown is concluding her tenure as president & chief executive officer (CEO) and will now focus on supporting the organization in its transition in advance of her pending retirement, as announced last spring.
- Sylvia Weir, the current chief financial officer (CFO) and vice president of corporate services has been appointed interim president & CEO.

“On behalf of the board of directors, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to Susan Brown for her unwavering commitment and service to Interior Health and the health and well-being of the communities we serve during the particularly challenging times of COVID-19 and a global health care worker shortage,” said Dr. Robert Halpenny, Interior Health board chair. “The board thanks Susan for her continued support to Interior Health and availability to advance the leadership transition plan as her successor is identified.”

Sylvia Weir has 25 years’ experience in health care, bringing experience both from the United Kingdom and Canada. As CFO and vice president, Sylvia led IH’s business support and accounting functions, manages contracted services and is responsible for capital

planning and projects. Sylvia is known as a values-based leader and is committed to supporting the delivery of front-line clinical services and building strong relationships and community partnerships.

Efforts will continue to reopen KGH's in-patient pediatric unit as soon as possible and we are committed to keeping the community updated as progress continues. KGH remains equipped to support any children requiring emergency care although pediatric in-patients will not be admitted at this time.

In the meantime, we extend gratitude to the pediatricians providing on-call coverage to the emergency department and we thank everyone working at the emergency department for their efforts during this challenging time.

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Key actions to support the reopening of Kelowna General Hospital Pediatrics

To support the safe and sustainable reopening of pediatric services at Kelowna General Hospital (KGH), a wide range of initiatives have been undertaken. Recently, a joint action committee in collaboration with Doctors of BC and the KGH Medical Staff Association has been established to more formally collaborate and report out on these efforts. Other actions to address and improve capacity have been made over the past few years.

More Support for Pediatricians

- **Contracts in Progress:** Pediatricians at KGH are currently working under short-term agreements while long-term contracts that reflect their needs are finalized.
- **Rebuilding Relationships:** Interior Health has reached out to community pediatricians to rebuild trust, listen to concerns and work closely together with the goal of strengthen partnerships.
- **New Doctors on the Way:** Four pediatricians have accepted offers. They will be arriving in the coming months, helping us to support and deliver sustainable pediatric care for children and families.

Better Tools and Training for Pediatric Care

- **Enhanced Nurse Training:** Nurses have completed additional pediatric training with a dedicated pediatric nurse educator to support ongoing training needs.
- **Equipment Upgrades:** Capital improvements have been completed to address immediate and future equipment needs essential for safe pediatric care.
- **Faster Transfers:** We are working with other hospitals to make it easier and quicker to transfer children who need care elsewhere, so that they get the help that they need without delay.

Planning for Emergencies

The Rapid Assessment and Transfer (RAFT) team is in place to assist in both the emergency department and general pediatrics, improving responsiveness during peak times.

Looking Ahead

Tier 5 NICU Plan Submitted: A formal business case has been sent to the Ministry of Health to upgrade the NICU to Tier 5 status, dependent on future funding and resources.

Steps Already Taken to Strengthen Pediatric Services:

Operational enhancements

- Implementing a pediatric float nurse role in the emergency department to provide focused support
- Launching the new Stabilization Essentials in Pediatrics (StEP) program in 2024, with another rollout planned for 2026
- Creating opportunities for pediatric clinical pathways and resources to be available around the clock through BC Children's Hospital.
- Hiring a dedicated pediatric clinical pharmacist to improve medication safety and care quality
- Supporting implementation of a pediatric quality committee set up at the provincial level to guide improvements in care

Learning opportunities

- Providing pediatric training to more than 260 nurses to enhance care at emergency departments across the region
- Increasing the number of site-based pediatric educators and hiring two regional pediatric educators to support staff learning
- Providing opportunities for critical care nurses to participate in hands-on pediatric training at BC Children's Hospital
- Providing acute care of at-risk newborn (ACoRN) training to staff at KGH
- Offering BCCH-led pediatric simulation sessions at KGH to support practical learning
- Hosting of monthly reviews by Pediatric critical care teams to learn from real-life cases