



# NEWS RELEASE

## For Immediate Release

February 22, 2018

### **Northern Health unable to fill a substantial number of nursing positions in rural areas**

VICTORIA – The Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia has released a new report: *An Independent Audit of the Recruitment and Retention of Rural and Remote Nurses in Northern B.C.*

Nurses are integral to healthcare in the north. They deliver the majority of patient care, and in some remote communities, they are the only permanent health care provider.

“Northern Health did not fill all of its Registered Nurse (RN) and Nurse Practitioner (NP) positions. While there are influences outside of Northern Health’s control when it comes to recruiting and retaining nurses, there are factors that it can control and therefore, areas for improvement,” said Auditor General Carol Bellringer.

As of April 2017, Northern Health was short 121 RNs or 15% of its rural and remote workforce, and more than a quarter of rural and remote NP positions were also vacant. The impacts of the staffing shortage include unmet patient needs, patient safety risks, nurse burnout, and higher costs to name just a few.

Numerous factors contributed to the shortage. Influences such as weather, isolation, limited amenities, and in some communities, the cost and availability of housing are beyond the health authority’s control. Factors that Northern Health can influence and improve include support for RNs joining interprofessional teams, training for nurse managers, and the distribution of RN education programs in northern B.C.

Northern Health has already implemented many good practices for recruitment and retention. These include a formal employee referral program, staff recognition programs, multiple targeted marketing campaigns, and student placements/clinical rotations at rural and remote locations.

Bellringer made nine recommendations in the report that address the root causes of the RN and NP shortage as well as the gaps between their current state and good practice.

The full report is available on the Office of the Auditor General website at [www.bcauditor.com](http://www.bcauditor.com). Bellringer will answer questions pertaining to the report via a news conference.



OFFICE OF THE  
**Auditor General**  
of British Columbia

News Conference Date: Thursday, February 22, 2018

Time: 12:30 p.m. (Pacific time)

Dial-in Information:

From Vancouver: 604 681-0260

From elsewhere in Canada and the USA: 1 877 353-9184

Participant Pass Code: 44848#

During question and answer period, to ask a question: Press 01

During question and answer period, to exit the question queue: Press #

**About the Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia**

The Auditor General is a non-partisan, independent Officer of the Legislature who reports directly to the Legislative Assembly. The *Auditor General Act* empowers the Auditor General and staff to conduct audits, report findings and make recommendations.

Contact us:

To speak to the Auditor General, call Emily Griffiths: 250-419-6132

For general questions, call Colleen Rose, Manager, Communications: 250-419-6207

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