



CHABC Newsletter

CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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In Comox, Changes for Saint Joseph's General Hospital

In the summer of 1913, four Toronto nuns of the Sisters of Saint Joseph landed in Comox, answering the call of Bishop MacDonald of Victoria to set up a hospital in the logging area of the Comox Valley. He was invited to do so at the request of the Comox Logging Company. The Sisters were on a mission of love and mercy - a creed that has endured the decades in *Saint Joseph's General Hospital*.

Over the years, the responsibility for the invitation to provide services at the hospital was passed on to the community, then with the advent of hospital insurance in 1960 to the Ministry of Health. With the signing of the Master Agreement in 1995 it passed to the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA).

At the end of September, VIHA announced its decision regarding the future of acute care service delivery for the Comox-Strathcona area of the province. The health authority believes that patients in the Comox Valley, Campbell River and the entire North Island would be best

served by a new regional hospital. The current plan is for a new facility to be located in the Comox Valley near the intersection of Dove Creek Road and the new Inland Island Highway.

Saint Joseph's General Hospital President and CEO Michael Pontus explained that there is an understanding and a respect that it is VIHA's role to determine the need and the location of where they wish to have services provided. It is *Saint Joseph's* role, as provider, to respond by giving them the best advice on the location of these services, their ability to deliver those services and the resources required, at the standard required.



Michael Pontus
President and CEO
Saint Joseph's General Hospital

A detailed site analysis, preparation of a business case and provincial government consideration of the plan will mean that *Saint Joseph's* will continue to operate as is for many more years. In the interim, VIHA remains committed to ensuring that the hospital is well maintained and resourced until a



A painting of the early hospital

new regional hospital opens its doors.

Nuclear Medicine Suite Opens

Through it all, exciting new innovations are happening at *Saint Joseph's*! In mid-October, the Hospital saw the addition of an \$800,000 gamma camera in its newly renovated nuclear medicine suite. Mr. Pontus said at that time, "I view this as a tangible example of VIHA's commitment to build regional services to meet the growing needs of the North Island".

The new \$800,000 General Electric Hawkeye Infinia series gamma camera will enable 3D image rendering. Only the second of its kind to be installed in Canada, the camera offers the most advanced technology in nuclear medicine.

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Aerial view of Saint Joseph's General Hospital today

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VIHA, the Comox Strathcona Regional District and the Ministry of Health jointly invested over \$1.3 million for equipment and renovations for the new suite. In addition, over \$500,000 was invested in renovations at *Saint Joseph's* to increase space and meet Canadian Nuclear Regulatory and infections control standards.

In addition to cancer and cardiac applications, nuclear medicine imaging is useful for detecting tumours, aneurysms, irregular or inadequate blood flow to various tissues, blood cell disorders and inadequate functioning of organs, such as thyroid and pulmonary deficiencies. This particular camera is expected to provide 3800 exams per year. Approximately 1060 of these will be tests for which North Island residents have previously had to travel to Nanaimo.

Living Skills Assessment Room Opens

Also this past October, the Occupational Therapy Department at *Saint Joseph's General Hospital* celebrated the opening of their new Living Skills Assessment Room. This room will be used to determine if patients are ready to return home and live independently and safely. It

incorporates a kitchen, bathroom and bedroom set-up equipped with specialty tools that allow a person to practice activities of daily living that most of us take for granted.

Saint Joseph's General History

When the Sisters first arrived in the Comox Valley in 1913, they quickly set up an eight-room farmhouse as the first convent hospital in the area. Construction additions brought enough room for ten patients in subsequent months. By the summer of 1914, they had beds for twenty-five. Another addition in 1923 increased the hospital's capacity to thirty-five patients.

The next expansion was in 1937 to allow for sixty-eight beds. That structure still stands today and, for thirty years, it met the needs of the community until a new acute care facility was built in 1967 when *Saint Joseph's* become the general hospital for the region.

Over the years, as the population in the region increased, further additions came in the form of bed capacity and services. An extended care wing was added in 1982 with seventy-five beds. This was increased by fifty more beds in 1993.

In 1989, the Sisters of Saint Joseph withdrew from the ownership and administration of the Hospital. The Diocese of Victoria now continues that role in conjunction with the Hospital Board of elected and appointed members. In 2003, the Hospital celebrated its 90th anniversary of serving the residents in the Comox Valley.

Over the years, renovations and expansions have continued to meet the needs of the community the Hospital serves. In the past five years alone, there were extensive renovations to the Intensive Care Unit, a Pediatric Sunroom was added, as well as a four-bed Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit.

Future Role for the Hospital

VIHA has stated its commitment to working closely with *Saint Joseph's General Hospital* administration and board during the upcoming transition period to determine a future role for the Hospital. This may include the provision of long term and palliative care. The Hospital Board, Administration and Staff look forward to continuing to serve health needs of the community in the Comox Valley as they are invited to do so. ■



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Bill 32 Update

Proposed changes to BC's Adult Guardianship legislation have been the focus of CHABC's work over the past months. While this legislation died on the order paper at the end of the Spring sitting of the House, it is expected to be brought back again in 2007.

One of the most significant aspects of the proposed change is to legalize written advance care directives for British Columbia. CHABC's work has involved consultations with BC Bishops, with government officials and with the regional health authorities whose role is to develop advance care plan programs for their facilities and local communities.

CHABC does not oppose the concept of legalizing advance care directives but has expressed several concerns to those who are responsible for the legislation changes and for implementing the programs. These are:

- Advance care directives are only for those who wish to have them. They must not be mandatory.
- Advance care plans must not be presented to patients/residents upon admission to a care facility. Having a plan should not be a condition of admission.
- Those who wish to have a written directive must be fully equipped to make informed decisions about what treatments and options for care are available to them. Catholics should be aware of what the Church teaches about end-of-life decision making and they may wish to include something

about their values and beliefs in their written directive.

- Patients and residents must have ample opportunity to discuss their wishes with families and loved ones, including their physician and their pastor. They should be encouraged to have these discussions.

The Association believes that these concerns can and will be addressed before the legislation comes before the government.

Written advance care directives are not for everyone. Some individuals may wish to appoint someone to speak on their behalf should the time come when they cannot speak for themselves.

Various templates for creating an advance directive are available on the Internet - - use your favourite search engine and key in "advance directives Catholic". ■

*"Glory to God in the highest
Heaven,
And on earth peace for those
He favours."
Luke 2:14*

President's Message ...

On behalf of the Board of Directors of CHABC, I wish you and your loved ones the Peace and Joy of this Holy season. May God continue to bless you as you bring His love to all of those that you serve in His name.



Our very best wishes for a
Happy and Healthy 2007!

Kit Mykyte
CHABC President

Study Day for the Kamloops Priests in Cache Creek

CHABC President Kit Mykyte and Executive Director Susan House were invited to present to the priests of the Kamloops Diocese as they attended their study days at the *Immaculate Heart Retreat Centre* in Cache Creek early in November.



Bishop Monroe and Kit Mykyte

Topics for discussion throughout the day included the mission of Catholic health care in British Columbia, an overview of the work of the *Denominational Health Association*, proposed changes to Adult Guardianship legislation in BC, advance care directives and stem cell research and cloning. ■

