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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Advanced Education

### **Physical therapy clinical training set to begin in North**

PRINCE GEORGE – Physical therapy students will gain practical experience and help patients in northern and rural communities thanks to a new post-secondary program announced today.

Through a joint effort by the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) and the University of British Columbia (UBC), government established a northern and rural clinical cohort allowing for 20 physical therapy students to complete most of their clinical placements in northern B.C. and rural communities each year, with UNBC serving as the clinical education hub. The partnership also will enable all of UBC's physical therapy students – 80 in each class – to pursue more of their five-week clinical rotations in the north.

MLA for Prince George-Mackenzie, Pat Bell and MLA for Prince George-Valemount, Shirley Bond were joined by UNBC and UBC faculty, staff and students, along with members of the community to announce this new program.

The first northern and rural cohort will begin their two-year education at UBC's Vancouver campus in September 2012, and begin their first placements the following spring. The northern and rural cohort students will be selected through revised admissions policies designed to target students with an interest in living and working in those areas. In addition, government provided one-time funding to UNBC to build a new physical therapy lab that will link by video with three similar labs at UBC.

Physical therapists are primary health-care professionals who combine knowledge of how the body works with specialized hands-on clinical skills to restore, maintain and maximize a patient's strength, function and movement. They help people recover mobility after injury, surgery or stroke; enable elderly people to maintain their independence; and assist people with chronic conditions, such as cancer or multiple sclerosis, to improve their fitness and quality of life.

#### **Quotes:**

#### **Pat Bell, MLA for Prince George-Mackenzie –**

"We recognize that health-care students who are educated in the North are more likely to stay and practice in the North. Physical therapy students who are part of this new cohort will have the opportunity to pursue careers and contribute to the economy in the North, providing quality health care to northern and rural communities, keeping them vibrant and healthy."

**Shirley Bond, MLA for Prince George-Valemount –**

"It is critical that we continue to add health-care training opportunities in Northern British Columbia. The addition of physical therapy will continue the expansion of post-secondary training programs and allow students from the North to stay closer to home as they pursue their chosen careers."

"It is important to recognize the partnership between UNBC and UBC that will allow physical therapy students to gain practical experience in northern and rural areas. Our government has made increased training opportunities in the North a priority, and this new program demonstrates that continued commitment."

**George Iwama, president, UNBC –**

"We'd like to thank our partners who made this possible. We also want to thank especially our MLAs for strongly supporting UNBC's shared desire to increase health-care professionals in the North."

**Dr. Gavin Stuart, dean, UBC Faculty of Medicine and UBC's vice provost health –**

"This announcement is another major step towards advancing our vision for distribution of health professional education to better meet the needs of northern and rural British Columbians and builds on the successful expansion of the distributed medical education program at UNBC."

"Health professional graduates are influenced in their choice of future employment by positive clinical experiences during their training, and we are confident that with our northern and rural clinical educator partners we will establish an excellent northern and rural clinical training program for physical therapy students."

**Quick Facts:**

Since 2001...

- The Province has provided approximately \$64.3 million in health-related post-secondary funding to institutions throughout the northern region of the province.
- The number of nursing spaces has more than doubled by adding over 4,450 spaces, resulting in over 20,000 credentials being awarded.
- The provincial government has more than doubled the number of first year medical school spaces in B.C. from 128 to 288.
- The northern medical program at UNBC, part of the UBC faculty of medicine's distributed medical program, has 32 first year spaces, with a total of 128 spaces in the northern medical program.

- The Province has invested more than \$2.5 billion in student financial assistance, making post-secondary education more accessible for students across the province.

**Learn More:**

- For information about student aid programs for post-secondary training, go to: <http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/studentaidbc>.
- For information about UNBC, go to: <http://www.unbc.ca>
- For information about the UBC physical therapy program, go to: <http://www.rehab.ubc.ca/>

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