

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
December 11, 2025

## **Certain inpatient admissions temporarily paused at West Coast General Hospital to uphold patient safety**

**Alberni Valley** — To ensure continued safe patient care, Island Health is temporarily pausing the admission of certain inpatients at West Coast General Hospital (WCGH) in Port Alberni effective December 10, 2025. This is due to a staffing shortage of hospitalists, the physicians who care for patients admitted to hospital who do not have a family doctor with admitting privileges.

The most important thing for the community to know is that **the emergency department remains open 24/7 at WCGH. If you need emergency care, do not wait. Call 911 or go to WCGH immediately.** Highly trained physicians, nurses and care teams will be ready to respond to emergency medical needs. No one will go without care.

If a patient requires admission and cannot stay at WCGH, our teams will ensure they are stable before transferring them to another hospital. Once there, patients will be placed under the care of a physician who can meet their needs and ensure their treatment continues without interruption.

This temporary change affects patients who:

- Do not have a family physician who works in the hospital
- Require admission to a hospital bed
- Do not require care from a specialist

Based on historical averages, approximately two to three patients per day may need to be transferred. Patients attached to physicians who admit to WCGH will continue to be admitted as usual. Surgical, psychiatric, labour and delivery services will continue as usual.

WCGH is experiencing staffing challenges and a shortage of hospitalists. However, efforts to negotiate in good faith continue and Island Health is exploring all options to sustain services. While this change in inpatient services is not directly related to the recent diversion of ICU services, Island Health remains focused on restoring physician coverage, supporting critical-care services, and ensuring people in the region have reliable access to the care they need.

“We know this is an extremely difficult thing for people in the Alberni Valley and West Coast to hear. Island Health fully acknowledges that the current situation at WCGH is unacceptable and the urgent actions underway must continue and be intensified to give the people of this region access to the care they deserve,” said Dawn Thomas, Aa ap waa iik, Island Health Vice President responsible for WCGH and Indigenous Health. “I have heard directly from community and First Nations leaders, as well as from my family and friends living in the region, that the current situation is not meeting the needs of the people we serve. It’s my commitment that we will work tirelessly to restore services at WCGH.”

“The reality is that we do not have enough physicians providing inpatient care at WCGH to ensure a consistent, safe environment for all patients who require admission,” said Dr. Ben Williams, Island Health Vice President of Medicine and WCGH locum physician. “This is a very difficult situation, and I know from my experience working at WCGH over the last 13 years how much the community relies on this hospital. But we have an obligation to make sure patients are receiving safe care when they come to one of our hospitals. It is the most important consideration in the work we do.”

Island Health is coordinating closely with BC Emergency Health Services and the Patient Transfer Network to ensure resources are in place for safe and timely transfers.

This situation will create additional pressures on other hospitals and Island Health is deeply grateful to the physicians and staff across the region for supporting their colleagues at WCGH. Clinical leaders are committed to taking extraordinary measures to support sites and respond as challenges arise.

Island Health also recognizes the increased demand this will place on the emergency department at WCGH. Significant work will continue to bring in additional resources to give our physicians, staff and patients the support they need.

Island Health is thankful for the ongoing conversations with community partners and First Nations leaders. A collaborative response — grounded in local guidance, partnership, and shared commitment — is essential to finding sustainable, long-term solutions that meet the needs of all communities served by WCGH. We are grateful for the willingness of partners to work together on these challenges.

*About Island Health:*

*Island Health provides health and care services to more than 930,000 people on Vancouver Island, the islands in the Salish Sea and the Johnstone Strait, and mainland communities north of Powell River. With more than 31,000 health care professionals – including more than 3,000 doctors, nurse practitioners, midwives and dentists that make up our Medical Staff – as well as 1,500 adult and youth volunteers providing over 70,000 annual hours of service, and the dedicated support of 12 foundations and 19 active auxiliaries, Island Health delivers a broad range of health services, including: public health services, primary health care, home and community care, mental health and substance use services, acute care in hospitals, and much more across a huge and geographically diverse region.*

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