

Kevin McNamara

Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness

Dartmouth General Hospital's Medical Staff Association Annual
Dinner (AGM)

Thursday, June 2, 2011

Brightwood Golf and Country Club

It is a pleasure to be here this evening.

Thank you to Dr. Ravi Parkash for inviting me, and to Carla Pitman, Dr. Doug Legay, Dr. Sam Chun and members of the Dartmouth General Charitable Foundation.

I'd like to congratulate the Dartmouth General Medical Association on another successful year of research, humanitarian work and patient care.

I look forward to learning more about the strides you have made in the orthopedic field, and your work here and overseas.

In addition to your daily responsibilities as leaders within Dartmouth General, I understand that you are very involved in your medical association – working to improve patient care and research in your field and to finding solutions to relationship challenges and difficult medical decisions.

On behalf of the Department of Health and Wellness I say thank you for your exceptional work and commitment.

I also want to thank you for working with us in a difficult economic time.

The province and doctors both recognize that what really matters is to provide better health care sooner and to ensure we are living within our means.

I understand that some of the concerns discussed at your association table are overcrowding and capacity.

By now, maybe you have heard of government's plan *Better Care Sooner* -- to protect patient care and improve access to health care across the province.

We all know that significant changes are needed to address emergency room closures and long wait times plaguing our health care system.

Better Care Sooner is an aggressive, targeted plan, based largely on the advice of Dr. John Ross, Nova Scotia's first advisor on emergency care.

He reported that many people, particularly in rural communities, who go to the ER do not require emergency care – and could instead be treated in a primary health care setting.

An important part of the Better Care Sooner plan is establishing collaborative emergency centres.

This year's provincial budget provides funding to open at least four of these throughout the province.

As you know, we are also working on reducing wait times at the province's largest emergency room. Since fall, twelve hundred (1200) patients at the Halifax Infirmary emergency room received the care they needed through a new Rapid Assessment Unit.

Our plan also focuses on improving patient transport.

The province now has a back-up fixed-wing aircraft for Emergency Health Services LifeFlight -- dedicated solely to emergency health care.

Soon we will have the province's first two-stretcher ambulance.

Nova Scotia is now the only jurisdiction in North America to have a province-wide program that enables advanced care paramedics to administer a new generation of clot-busting medication ...

... to treat someone experiencing a heart attack before they arrive at the hospital.

Budget 2011 contains \$72 million to support major hospital and community health care projects across the province including ...

- Funding for phase one of a modern, cost-effective and efficient emergency department at the Aberdeen Hospital;
- Money for the construction of the new Colchester East Hants Health Centre; and
- Money to purchase and install three new radiation therapy units at Capital Health.

Nova Scotians are traveling too far for renal dialysis. A million dollars is going to the expansion of those services.

The province will invest \$616,000 to support pre-hab teams in the four district health authorities that perform hip and knee surgeries.

Clinics will also provide patients in Capital, Pictou County, Cape Breton, and Annapolis Valley with the tools and information they need to prepare for surgery and to support a successful surgery and quicker recovery.

The province is committing \$4 million over two years to fully fund the Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention (EIBI) program for children with autism.

We are working to improve mental health and addictions services.

The new Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit at East Coast Forensic Hospital expands on collaborative work underway among emergency departments, mental health programs, and the police ...to provide a crisis response to mental health emergencies.

We are setting targets for acute and chronic disease reduction.

We are working to ensure drugs are more affordable and accessible.

We are establishing a Drug Management Policy Unit.

You have likely heard about the physician resource plan we are developing.

This plan will tell the department how many and what types of doctors – family doctors as well as specialists – we will need across the province and where we will need them over the next 10 years.

Consultants will be talking with doctors and other health care providers across the province as well as with senior staff at the Department of Health and Wellness and district health authorities ... the medical school, Doctors Nova Scotia, the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

We need many points of view to develop the most relevant and useful plans for providing front-line health care.

We depend on organizations and associations like yours to help us make decisions that will lead to a stronger, healthier province.

We depend on individuals like you to help make life better for families in Nova Scotia every day.