

1994
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Mobile mammography unit officially open

Anna Milligan

Staff Writer

Fort St. John

A vision became a reality Friday as physicians, nurses, hospital administrators and the public gathered at the Fort St. John General Hospital for the opening of the new mobile screening mammography program.

Tribute was paid to former hospital administrator Ric Wilson who had the vision and initiated the drive to get a mobile mammography unit for the hospital.

"We did it! We really made it happen," said Heather Wilson, wife of the former hospital administrator who died of cancer on New Year's Day a few years ago.

"Ric saw the chance to make a difference. It was something to plan for, to leave behind," said Heather Wilson. "He wanted to help prevent others from suffering as he was."

Breast cancer remains a leading

cause of death among women and early detection is one of the best tools the medical profession and women have in fighting this disease, said Paul Ramsey, the B.C. Minister of Health.

"Be detecting cancer early we can save lives," said Ramsey. "We spend \$6.4 million a year on mammography and every dime is well spent."

Ramsey was joined in the official celebration of the mobile unit by Dr. Ivo Olivotto, chair of the steering committee of the Screening Mammography Program of British Columbia, Linda Gentles, chair of the hospital board of trustees, Heather Wilson and Dr. Michael Wright, a close friend and associate of the former Dr. Wilson.

The ceremony marked the official opening of the unit which has been at work in the community for many weeks now.

The community was given credit for raising the funds to purchase the

unit.

"We raised almost \$1.70 for every man, woman and child in the Peace Region," said Heather Wilson. "Congratulations to the board and the public for taking on this challenge."

The benefit of the mobile unit is just that - it's mobile.

Already the unit will need to make a return visit to Hudson's Hope were women lined up to make an appointment and a second day has been schedule for mammograms in Fort Nelson.

This seemed to give credence to a statement made by Ramsey in his closing remarks.

"We need to take services to people - not always take people to the services," said Ramsey. "As we look at what we need this program is a model of what were after."

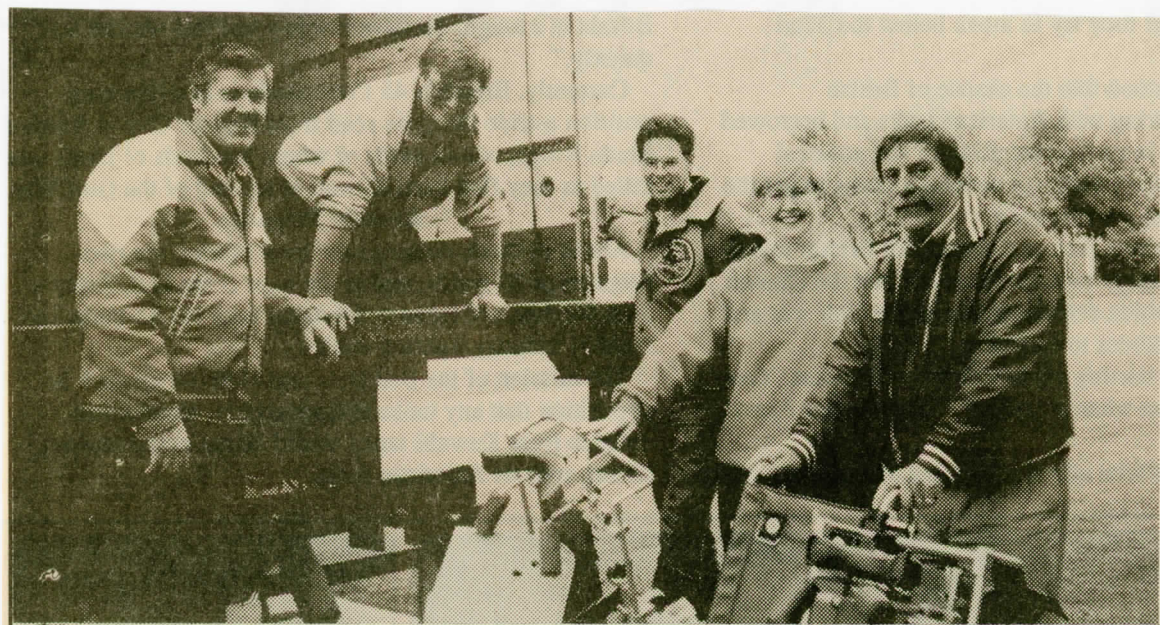
"We need to detect and prevent rather than pick up the bodies after they fall off the cliff," said Ramsey.

1994
OCTOBER.



Minister of Health Paul Ramsey was in Fort St. John Friday to celebrate the official opening of the new mobile screening mammography program at the Fort St. John General Hospital. He was joined by Heather Wilson, Dr. Michael Wright and Dr. Ivo Olivotto.

Oct 11, 1994
Staff photo by Anna M.



OCT 27, 1994
HELPING OUT — Members of the Fort St. John Rotary Club lend a hand loading used medical equipment donated by the Child Development Centre and by the Fort St. John General Hospital. The equipment is being transported to Abbotsford courtesy of Canadian Freightways, where the local Rotary Club will in turn ship it to various countries in need. This project was initiated by the CDC in conjunction with the Abbotsford Rotary Club.
(Photo submitted)

Dated census figures hurt local hospital

Dave Williams

Staff Writer

Fort St. John

The region's see-sawing population is proving to be a headache for local hospital officials trying to convince the province that three-year-old census figures are no longer accurate.

Fort St. John General Hospital administrator Millie Asling said the facility's funding is based on the number of people it serves and how old they are with a more youthful population generally being more healthy.

Asling said funding to the local hospital is based on population figures collected during the last census in 1991.

In the meantime, however, Asling said the region's burgeoning economy has upped those figures considerably.

"What we keep trying to tell them is that our population is more than what they are telling us. That's always been our argument with the Ministry of Health, that they don't respond fast enough," she said.

"We go through it every boom and bust cycle." Asling said she's been trying to find more

Funding lags behind boom, charges administrator

Oct 21, 1994

accurate, up-to-date population figures, but to no avail.

"I've tried the city and the regional district and they say it's up, but short of going around and counting noses, there's not much that can be done," she said.

Asling said the hospital's out-patient services in particular are witnessing a major surge in usage.

With the traditional winter rise in oilpatch related accidents on its way, Asling said the already hectic pace seen at the hospital will only get worse.

Asling said the cyclical nature of the Fort St. John economy can prompt substantial and sudden changes in population.

"It can happen so quickly," she said. "In fact, even when they do a census it takes six months and by the time it's done, our population could've changed a lot."

Asling said she's now turning to drilling reports, vacancy statistics and other figures in an attempt to prove the hospital's case.

Although she said such an argument has not been successfully made in the past, Asling added there's always a first time.

Mayor Steve Thorlakson said the city's best guess on Fort St. John's population is 14,750. The 1991 census placed the number of residents at 14,156.

"There are formulas that B.C. stats provides. It's educated guesswork at best," Thorlakson said.

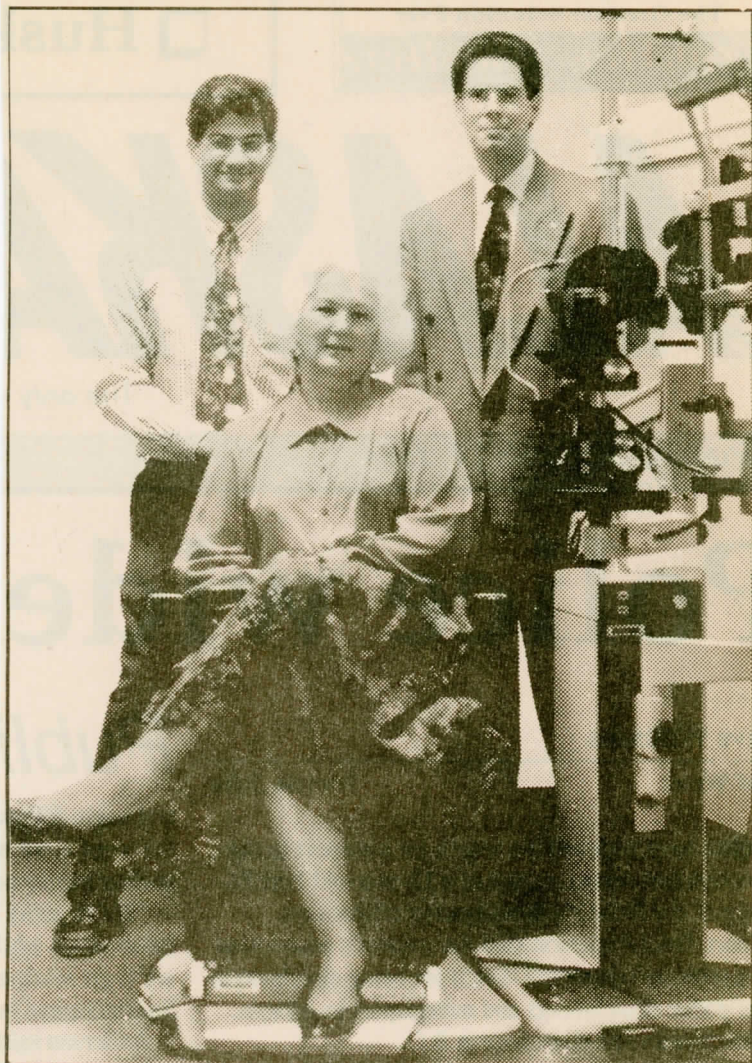
He said the city took into account such factors as vacancy rates and an average number of people per household.

"On a whole range of issues, without having accurate data, it's difficult to make your point," Thorlakson said. "As a result, you wind up using estimates in the meantime and that can make things difficult."

He said Alberta municipalities conduct and pay for their own census information, at a cost of about \$1.50 per person.

"I don't know if that's much more accurate or helpful than using the formulas," Thorlakson said.

He said transient, short-term residents make up a substantial proportion of new residents in Fort St. John, but when it comes census time, they list their original address as the place of residence so even then, they're not counted as part of the local population.



FOR SIGHT — Marking the opening of the second eye examination lane at the Fort St. John General Hospital are ophthalmologist Suren Sanmugasunderam, left, Rotary Club past-president Brian Gentles and hospital board public relations chairman Valerie Powell. The local Rotary Club donated almost half the \$45,000 needed to purchase the equipment with residents and businesses contributing the rest.

(Staff photo by Dave Williams)

1994
NOVEMBER



Nov 4, 1994

DONATION — The local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion recently made a \$2,000 donation to the Fort St. John General Hospital. The money came from the poppy trust fund. Shown in the phot above are Ernie McKnight, Valerie Powell, Ken Morton and Audrey Wallace.

Hospital retains three-year accreditation

Nov 24, 1994

Submitted by Twila Soule

Fort St. John

The Fort St. John General Hospital is pleased to announce that we have retained our three-year accreditation that is awarded through the Canadian Council on Health Facilities Accreditation. We were participants in a pilot study whose revised standards focused on patient care and included patient interviews.

The diligent efforts of the hospital staff paved the way for a consistent evaluation with many positive suggestions for improving our service.

Due to the implementation the accord, the agreement struck between the Ministry of Health and the unions, employees were given a 36-hour work week. This amounts of ten additional days off per year.

Reduced Staffing

Since there was no increase in funding, the hospital has decided to reduce staffing and operate at weekend levels the last Friday of each month. Only emergency and urgent services are being provided on those Fridays and we are asking for the public co-operation in keeping traffic flow to a minimum at those times.

The hospital Gala Fundraising Dinner was well attended and a total of \$6,000 was raised.

With the Royal Canadian Legion's donation of \$2,500, and the local Rotary Club's \$5,000 donation, we were able to complete our fundraising project for the purchase of a trauma stretcher.

Second Eye Lane

We are also pleased to announce that the second eye lane is now open. The Rotary Club of Fort St. John agreed to join forces with the hospital board in raising the needed \$45,000.00 for equipment. Over the remainder of 1993 and the early part of 1994 fundraising continued.

Thanks to the generosity of the residents of this region, the support of many businesses in Fort St. John and surrounding area, and the Rotary Club which donated \$20,000, the second eye land is a reality.

With the second eye land in operation it will allow the ophthalmologist to move from one room to the other or provide working space for both specialists. Hopefully we will see a decrease in the waiting list once the second eye land has been in operation for awhile.

Once again we remind you that the mobile mammography unit is now in operation. Anyone over the age of 40 need only phone this toll free number, 1-800-663-9203, for an appointment. Our visiting program has been very successful with extra days required in both Fort Nelson and Hudson's Hope.





Hospital spreads Christmas cheer

Anna Milligan

Staff Writer

Fort St. John

Some people will admit to enjoying a stay at the hospital but no one wants to be there over Christmas.

For those who are hospitalized over the holidays the staff and hospital auxiliary does its best to bring a little festive cheer from home to the ward.

A visit to the Fort St. John General Hospital this week will find its corridors and nursing stations merrily decorated in the festive mood. A huge stuffed Santa Claus waits in the admitting area to welcome those who come through the doors.

But the ultimate goal of hospital staff is to see as many patients as possible are released and sent home for the holidays.

"Anyone who can get out does," said hospital administrator Mildred Asling. "Some years we don't have any children here — if we can get them home we do."

But not everyone can get home. The 64-bed facility usually has about 20-25 patients every Christmas who spend the holidays in a hospital bed.

For them there is a special holiday meal prepared on Christmas day that can be shared with family, and the auxiliary prepares a holiday tray of favors for all patients and every baby born during that time period receives a special Christmas stocking.

In the week leading up to Christmas the Salvation

Army and the Alliance Church choir pay a visit and sing traditional carols for the patients.

The hospital also bends the visitor's rules on Christmas day and allows as many visitors as a patient wishes to come and stay the day.

"Mostly we have accident victims and women who go into labor," said Claire Harwood, head nurse of maternity. "We try to do our best for them."

Santa's sleigh, loaded down with gifts, won the hospital's Christmas decoration contest this week. Mona Entwistle, front, and Hilda Scevenek were among the housekeeping staff to contribute to this festive scene. The contest is held every Christmas season in an effort to bring a little holiday cheer to the staff and patients.