



News Release – for immediate distribution

May 17, 2017

BC Rural Health Awards recognize physician innovation, collaboration to save Fort St John healthcare

VANCOUVER – Two British Columbia rural physicians and three organizations in the community of Fort St. John were recognized and feted for their accomplishments and contributions to rural medical practice at the Rural Coordination Centre of BC's (RCCbc) BC Rural Health Conference held in Prince George, BC on Saturday, May 13th, 2017.

Two physicians were honoured for contributions that greatly elevated the health and well-being of their respective communities. Dr. **Leta Burechailo** received the Award of Excellence in Rural Medicine: Innovation for her preventative and primary care work with at-risk youth in Powell River. Dr. **Nicole Ebert** received the Award of Excellence in Rural Medicine: Lifetime Achievement for her contributions to primary and obstetrical care in Vanderhoof, along with her work as clinical faculty for UBC's Department of Family Practice rural residency program, and her numerous leadership and administrative roles, including a recent tenure as the Medical Lead of the Northern Health Elder Services Program.

The **North Peace Division of Family Practice/Northern Health/City of Fort St. John** were joint recipients of the Rural BC Community Award for their collaborative work in handling the 2013 primary care crisis in Fort St. John. This diverse group of physicians, local government officials, and health authority representatives developed strategies to recruit and retain new physicians and implement new models of service delivery to provide appropriate health care for their community.

2017 marks the fourth year that RCCbc has recognized BC physicians and communities for their contribution and dedication to rural medical practice with the BC Rural Health Awards (formerly the Awards of Excellence in Rural Medicine). Each year, RCCbc recognizes rural physicians within a themed category (e.g., Rural Opinion Leaders in 2015, Outstanding Mentors in 2014) as well as acknowledging long-term practitioners who have shaped and served their communities for more than 15 years. In 2016, RCCbc began to honour the valuable work of interprofessional health care teams in sustaining and/or retaining rural community health services in British Columbia.

A call for nominations was issued in February 2017 through *BC Rural Update*, the eNewsletter of the RCCbc for the 2017 BC Rural Health Awards. Recipients were selected by a committee consisting of representatives from RCCbc and the University of British Columbia. All honourees received a physical plaque/award, along with a \$2,500 grant to be used for hosting a community celebration.

The BC Rural Health Awards are made possible through the generous funding provided by the [Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues](#) (JSC). The JSC is a joint collaboration between the BC government and the Doctors of BC that provides policy oversight as well as funding for rural physician programs to increase recruitment and retention of doctors in British Columbia.

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QUOTATIONS

Dr. Ray Markham, Executive Director

“RCCbc is pleased to be able to shine a spotlight on some of the great work being done by rural physicians throughout the province. Many innovative advances in medicine are being developed and pioneered by rural health care teams.”

BACKGROUNDER

Rural Coordination Centre of BC

rccbc.ca

The Rural Coordination Centre of BC (RCCbc) works to enhance rural education in British Columbia and advocates to improve the health of rural BC residents.

Working at the direction of the JSC, and in collaboration BC’s health authorities, post-secondary institutions, practitioners, and rural communities, RCCbc identifies gaps and overlaps in rural services throughout the province and creates initiatives to address shortfalls. It works to increase and sustain recruitment and retention of rural healthcare professionals to BC and to provide high quality, in-community healthcare to rural British Columbians.

Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues

rccbc.ca/rccbc/about-the-jsc/

The Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues (JSC) is a BC-based entity that includes representation from the Doctors of BC, the Ministry of Health, and health authorities. The JSC advises the BC Government and the Doctors of BC on matters pertaining to rural medical practice and develops programs and policies for BC’s rural physicians.

ADDENDA

A PDF with the submitted biographies of all 2017 Awards of Excellence in Rural Medicine winners is available upon request.

Photographs of the award winners from the May 13 ceremony are available upon request.