

Western New Brunswick

Service Commission

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Statement

Western New Brunswick Service Commission

The Western New Brunswick Service Commission (WNBSC), representing all Mayors across Western New Brunswick and the Chair of the Rural District, wishes to assure the residents we serve that we share their deep concern regarding the current state of services at the Upper River Valley Hospital.

The Upper River Valley is a distinct region in all respects, including its healthcare needs. In 2004, the commitment from the Provincial Government to the region was the establishment of a regional hospital located in Waterville, supported by a Tobique Valley Health Centre staffed by doctors, nurses, and nurse practitioners, as well as the Hôtel-Dieu Saint-Joseph Hospital providing 24-hour emergency services and 15 acute-care beds. This commitment has not been honoured, and it does not reflect the current local healthcare reality for the more than 35,000 residents of the Western Valley Region.

Recent media reporting—including comments from local physicians and regional MLAs—has drawn renewed attention to the growing challenges within our regional hospital, particularly the instability surrounding surgical and anesthesiology coverage and the need for stronger, more consistent local leadership. These issues place core services at risk and create significant uncertainty for patients, families, healthcare professionals, and the economic growth potential of our region.

As a collective, the Mayors of Western New Brunswick have been actively advocating for improvements to healthcare delivery in our region—advocacy that long predates the most recent public discussions. We firmly believe our regional hospital requires dedicated, focused attention, not a centralized approach from Fredericton that overlooks the unique needs of rural communities.

As municipal leaders, we also occupy a unique non-partisan position. We are not here to debate past decisions or assign blame. Our responsibility is to the people we serve today. The challenges facing the Upper River Valley Hospital demand immediate, practical solutions and a renewed commitment from provincial health leadership to stabilize and strengthen services in Western NB.

To that end, the WNBSC Board is formally requesting a meeting with the Premier, the Minister of Health, and the CEO of the Horizon Health Network. Our message will be clear:

- The Upper River Valley must be operated as a distinct healthcare region within the Horizon Health Network, with autonomy for local management and medical leadership.
- Residents of Western New Brunswick deserve equitable and reliable access to healthcare within the region.
- Our regional healthcare facilities require strengthened local leadership, increased staffing, and a dedicated recruitment and retention strategy.

The Board remains committed to working collaboratively with all partners to ensure the Upper River Valley Hospital remains a strong, stable, fully functioning regional hospital—one that provides consistent acute care, surgical services, and uninterrupted obstetrics care, meeting the needs of our communities today and into the future.

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