

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Paediatric Emergency Transport Team in motion across Northwestern Ontario

(Thunder Bay, ON – February 13, 2025) A new team dedicated to transporting neonates and infants has started performing patient transfers at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (TBRHSC).

In collaboration with the existing provincial transport teams and ORNGE, TBRHSC's Paediatric Emergency Transport Team (PETT) is drastically improving access to care and reducing wait times for patients in communities across Northwestern Ontario, so they can receive the emergency care they need as fast as possible.

Prior to establishing this team, infants in need of emergency care had to wait at hospitals or health centres for transport teams from southern Ontario or Manitoba to be transferred to Thunder Bay or other tertiary centres. TBRHSC's dedicated team will have a positive impact on timely access to care for infant patients across Northwestern Ontario – particularly for remote and Indigenous communities – and will help save the lives of some of Ontario's youngest patients.

"This dedicated transport team provides specialized care that supports the unique care needs for the paediatric population of Northwestern Ontario," said Dr. Rhonda Crocker Ellacott, President and CEO of TBRHSC, CEO of Thunder Bay Regional Health Research Institute. "This vital service will improve health outcomes for newborns and infants requiring urgent or emergent care when transport to a tertiary care centre is needed."

With this new team, Northwestern Ontario patients aged newborn to 12 months who require urgent or emergent care at a higher level than is in their community, will be transported by PETT and brought to the accepting hospital, depending on their needs. The transport team will eventually operate 24/7 and will consist of one registered respiratory therapist (RRT) and one registered nurse (RN), supported by a paediatrician.

"The specialized Paediatric Emergency Transport Team ensures that infants in the North have access to advanced care when they need it," states Crystal Edwards, Director of Women and Children's and Mental Health Programs at TBRHSC and Director of the Transport Team. "This effort brings us closer to harmonizing health care in Northwestern Ontario with the rest of the province. It will allow for relationship-building and shared skills and knowledge between the team and the regional hospitals and remote nursing stations. We are grateful for the support of our partners to make this a reality."

To support PETT and its operations, a second paediatric transfer deck — used for transporting patients safely and efficiently — was recently added thanks to the generosity of donors to the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation and a matching contribution from the Sandra Schmirler Foundation. While one paediatric transfer deck was already in operation, a second deck was needed to ensure the team can respond to even more critically ill children. To complete this deck, the Health Sciences Foundation successfully fundraised for two essential pieces of equipment: a ventilator and a defibrillator.

The Paediatric Emergency Transport Team will be implemented in phases, starting with coverage to stabilize and transfer newborns and infants up to 12 months of age, with the future plan to transport a larger paediatric population.

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Exceptional care for every patient, every time.

Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (TBRHSC), a 425-bed academic specialized acute care facility, is a national leader in Patient and Family Centred Care. As the only tertiary care provider in Northwestern Ontario, we provide comprehensive services to a population of over 250,000 residents in a region the size of France. Effectively addressing the health care needs of patients and families has earned us both Innovation Awards and Leading Practice Designations. As an academic health sciences centre, we teach the next generation of health care providers and advance medical research. Patients benefit from interprofessional teams of dedicated health care providers and access to leading-edge medical technology and clinical trials. To fulfill its teaching and research strategic goals, TBRHSC is supported by Thunder Bay Regional Health Research Institute (TBRHRI) as a not-for-profit and independent research corporation. TBRHRI is the research arm of TBRHSC and seeks to lead research to improve the health outcome of the people of Northwestern Ontario and beyond.

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