



REPORT

To: Health Care Scholarship Committee

Report Number: ADM-HCSC-014

From: Administration

Date: April 25, 2025

Subject: Suspension of Scholarships – Expiry of Northern Health MOU

RECOMMENDATION #1:

That the Health Care Scholarship Committee recommend that the Regional Board suspend health care scholarship programs previously administered by Northern Health for the 2025 intake year, and authorize an investigation into potential alternative options for the administration of the scholarships that were administered by Northern Health; RN/RPN Return of Service Scholarship (Part 2), Licence Practical Nurse Scholarship, Career Professional Development Scholarship, and RN/RPN Professional Development Scholarship; further, that the Health Care Scholarship Committee receive a report to prompt a review of the options available for scholarship administration against the option to refocus funding on recruitment/retention, or other health care improvement initiatives permissible within the establishing bylaw for Function 180 – Health Related Services at a future HCSC meeting as part of the investigation.

RECOMMENDATION #2

That the Health Care Scholarship Committee recommend that the Regional Board suspend Part 1 (4th year degree program completion funding in the amount of \$2500 per student) of the RN/RPN Scholarship administered by the Regional Board for the 2025 intake year, pending the results of the review of potential alternative options identified in the investigation summary report, for the administration of the scholarships/ refocusing of the funding available to other health care initiatives permissible under Function 180.

BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:

At the February 20, 2025 meeting, the Regional Board passed the following resolution:

MOVED, SECONDED and CARRIED,

“That the Regional Board allow the Memorandum of Understanding with the Northern Health Authority for the administration of Peace River Regional District Health Care Scholarships offered in cooperation with the Regional Board and the Northern Health Authority to expire; further, that funding in an amount sufficient to meet the remaining obligations of the Regional Board under the Memorandum be included in Function 180 – Health Related Services Draft 2025 -2029 Financial Plan.”

The MOU with Northern Health, which set out the responsibilities of the PRRD and Northern Health respectively, to receive, review and award health care scholarships, will expire on May 1, 2025.

As per the February 20th Board resolution noted above, funding was included in the 2025 Function 180 Budget. The future of these scholarships is somewhat unclear, and alternative ways to advertise and

disburse the funds need to be identified for the administration of these scholarships in a different way given that Northern Health is no longer given this responsibility should the Health Care Scholarship Committee (HCSC) wish to continue offering the scholarships in future years. How the scholarships would be handled was not considered during the budget process and direction was not provided to find a new partner or consider in house scholarship administration when the decision was made to let the MOU with Northern Health expire. Staff would require a close working relationship with Northern Health to determine eligibility for return of service amounts for graduating students who agreed to work in the region, and for professional development scholarships for existing Northern Health employees. There is no current position that has the capacity to set up, monitor, administer and confirm the return of service portion of the scholarship in cooperation with Northern Health.

It is recommended that these scholarships are suspended until next steps are determined. It would be beneficial at this time for the committee to take a pause and see how they would like to approach utilizing the monies that were previously dedicated to Northern Health, for existing, or new opportunities under Function 180.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

1. That the Health Care Scholarship Committee provide further direction.

STRATEGIC PLAN RELEVANCE:

☒ Not Applicable to Strategic Plan

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION(S):

Funding to allow disbursement of all of the scholarships was included in the Function 180 Draft Budget. (See the link to the budget report provided below for details). If not expended in 2025, it will be carried forward in Function 180 to 2026 unless otherwise directed.

COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATION(S):

If approved, updates to the website and brochures will be required to remove the option to apply for these grants this year. Staff will advise any candidates who enquire that the program has been suspended for this year.

OTHER CONSIDERATION(S):

The HCSC held a Special Meeting on February 11, 2025 to hear from representatives of education institutions (Northern Lights College and University of Northern British Columbia) and Northern Health regarding their suggestions for improvements to the scholarship program structure to maximize the positive impact of the program on the recruitment and retention of health care professionals in the region. Previous to that, ([January 10, 2025](#)) the HCSC had deliberated on a variety of changes to the scholarship program, to decrease the number of available scholarships to enable an increase in the value of scholarships based on feedback from student luncheons which suggested that the scholarships were not of enough value to ensure return of service commitment, though no changes were made. Previous to that, on January 25, 2024, when the HCSC referred a decision on a request from Northern Health to offer additional scholarships to the Regional Board, the Board resolved to examine the structure and purpose of the HCSC. The Committee of the Whole referred that review back to the HCSC

to the July 17 Health Care Scholarship Committee. There have been several discussions regarding the purpose of the committee. A pause to reassess may provide some clarity.

The Committee may identify a new partner or consider establishing a new staff position to take on this responsibility, or may suggest that the Regional Board offer a different array of scholarships or refocus the funding to other ideas.

External Links:

1. [Report ADM-BRD-583 Health Care Scholarship Committee Recommendation from February 11, 2025](#)
(February 20, 2025 Regional Board Meeting, Agenda Item 8.9)
2. [Report FN-BRD-326, Function 180 – Health Related Services Draft 2025 Budget](#)
(February 26, 2025 Special (Budget) Board Meeting, Agenda Item 6.13)
3. [Report ADM-COW-009 Health Care Scholarship Committee Review](#)
(July 17 2024 Health Care Scholarship Committee Meeting, Agenda Item 8.1)