

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release Feb. 2, 2009

### **LOWER MAINLAND HEALTH AUTHORITIES AIM TO IMPROVE MEDICALLY STABLE PATIENT TRANSFERS**

VANCOUVER – Fraser Health (FH), Providence Health Care (PHC) and Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) have awarded two-year contracts to Medi-Van Canada Inc. (Medi-Van) and SN Transport Canada Limited (SN Transport) to provide transfers for medically stable patients between health facilities, residential care facilities and community locations. The contracts are part of a province-wide initiative to address the growing demand for this patient transfer service.

“Introducing this service will most certainly benefit patients,” said Minister of Health Services George Abbott. “Much like in other areas of the province where this has already been implemented, it will allow for improved patient flow and more timely service for FH, PHC and VCH patients.”

Currently, BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) is the primary provider of inter-facility patient transfers, transferring over 89,000 patients in the areas served by FH, PHC and VCH each year. Many of these patients, such as those being routinely transferred from a residential care home to hospital for tests or dialysis treatment, do not require an ambulance and would be better suited to an alternate service provider (ASP).

“FH, VCH and PHC are working closely together to improve services and reduce duplication in costs to benefit patients across the Lower Mainland,” said David Handley, executive director, Business Initiatives and Support Services, for the three organizations. “This collaborative initiative will result in over \$2 million in savings annually that can be re-directed into patient care.”

BC Ambulance Service will remain the provider of emergency medical services in the Lower Mainland. Patients who require medical monitoring or intervention will continue to be transferred by BCAS under the supervision of qualified paramedics. Using alternate service providers will permit BCAS to focus on patients who need their skills the most.

The service will be introduced in March. Both Medi-Van and SN Transport have the capabilities of providing ambulatory, wheelchair and stretcher transfers for patients who do not require medical care during transport. Service will be available Monday to Friday during peak hours and for scheduled after-hours appointments and on week-ends. Both vendors will be servicing the Lower Mainland area.

Fees charged for transfer will be less than what is currently charged by the BC Ambulance Service and will be consistent with those charged in other areas of BC. Patients who are currently excluded from charges by the BC Ambulance Service will also be exempt under this initiative. These include patients on income assistance or premium assistance or who are being transported between acute care facilities. During the ramp up phase of this initiative, no new patient fees will be introduced by SN Transport or Medi-Van. This will give our patients time to understand the service and to be more informed about their transfer options.

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Medi-Van originated in Manitoba and has been providing non-emergency stretcher and wheelchair service in Canada for over 30 years. They service personal care homes, hospital wards, emergency departments and doctors' offices, and have been working with hospitals and health facilities in southern Vancouver Island for 10 years. They were recently contracted with Interior Health to provide ASP service.

SN Transport, based in the Lower Mainland, has been operating since 2003. Its management team based its business on a successful UK model that provided service to health authorities, social services and local government. SN Transport has been providing some alternate provider service to VCH for five years.

Both companies use stretcher and wheelchair vehicles that are equipped with basic patient care equipment. All employees have a minimum qualification of Occupational First Aid and CPR for Healthcare Professionals. In their nearly 40 years of combined customer service, neither Medi-Van nor SN Transport has ever had any patient safety incidents.

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**For media enquiries, please contact:**

Fraser Health Public Affairs  
Media pager: 604-450-7881

Shaf Hussain  
Chief Communications Officer  
Providence Health  
Tel: 604 806 8566

Gavin Wilson  
Regional Director, Public Affairs, VCH  
604-708- 5312