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FNHA and Health Canada Joint Statement for Stakeholders: Office of the Auditor General Study on First Nations Health Services

February 2, 2016

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) and Health Canada today welcome the findings of the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) Report: Establishing the FNHA in British Columbia (BC).

The report affirms several positive elements of FNHA's work and the establishment of the First Nations health governance structure in BC. It also highlights that the partners are on the right path to achieving the goals set out in the guiding documents and agreement that established the First Nations health governance structure, and that the work underway is addressing challenges related to systemic obstacles to service delivery for First Nations communities in BC.

Since the establishment of the FNHA, there have been several changes to enhance local health service delivery including: the establishment of the FNHA and Province of BC Joint Project Board; new clinical and administrative capacity through the creation of Senior Medical Officer and Regional Director Positions within the FNHA; and progress in the areas of eHealth and Data stewardship.

We welcomed this external review of operations and viewed the audit portion as a learning opportunity. The FNHA has openly expressed itself as a learning organization and acknowledges there is work to do as the Authority evolves, and this work is underway.

FNHA operations as analyzed by the OAG reflect those of an evolving, first-of-its-kind organization. As partners we recognize that the FNHA is a First Nations organization building a unique institution in uncharted territory and as such can expect extra scrutiny. There was no roadmap for transfer and the compressed timeframe required the FNHA to build a team and establish operating policies quickly.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, Health Canada and FNHA are committed to evolving corporate governance to achieve the highest management standards. This includes integrating First Nations cultural perspectives and approaches, considering industry best practices and taking into account procedures found in other public and private organizations.

In addition, the FNHA and Health Canada have formally established processes to advance joint priorities, monitor progress in resolving issues, and work toward continuous improvement. In response to the observations and recommendations of the OAG, a specific provision will be included in the annual executive operational agenda.

In closing we look forward to implementing the OAG recommendations and continuing our shared work towards removing the systemic barriers to better health outcomes for First Nations communities in BC.