

INFANT TRANSPORT TEAM



PETER KEHLER OF THE
BC AMBULANCE INFANT
TRANSPORT TEAM ON
STANDBY.

Thanks to you, specialized paramedics will soon have the additional incubators needed to safely transport BC's most critically ill babies to the BC Women's Hospital Newborn ICU.

BY HELENA BRYAN PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTOPHER MORRIS

The staff at the tiny community hospital in Fort St. James, in north-central BC, had worked heroically to safely deliver 28-week-old twins. But at just two pounds each, it was clear the premature babies needed the specialized level 3+ care available only at BC Women's Newborn ICU. Thankfully, within hours the babies were on a jet bound for BC Women's and in the capable hands of the specialized critical care paramedics of the BC Ambulance Service's Infant Transport Team (ITT).

"By the time we arrived, the nurses were coping as best they could with their available resources," says ITT paramedic Peter Kehler, who was assigned to provide critical care to the babies during transport. "Happily, we were able to get these two babies safely to Vancouver."

When a baby is born premature or is critically ill, even seconds can mean the difference between life and death. That's why the ITT is so important. The role of this elite team, comprising rigorously trained paramedics, is to support and safely transport these babies to BC Women's Newborn ICU quickly, from anywhere in BC.

Kehler is one of 25 ITT paramedics with the BC Ambulance Service. The ITT is one of only two teams in North America specially trained to care for three patient populations – maternal, neonatal and pediatric. Paramedics are on standby around the clock and rely on specially designed and equipped jets, helicopters and ambulances to transport their tiny patients.

Kehler says that the single most critical piece of equipment for the ITT is

the Infant Transport Incubator: "It's portable and comes with ventilators, a cardio-respiratory monitor and heater system – pretty well everything we need to keep the babies safe during transport."

Not surprisingly, the equipment is in constant use. In fact, three of the ITT's six incubators are in urgent need of replacement.

Thanks to you, together with Canucks for Kids, Oppenheimer, and Canadian Western Bank, BC Women's Hospital Foundation is working to provide the new incubators so critical to the safe transport of BC's tiniest patients.

Please help us to continue to ensure the ITT has the technology it needs to transport BC's sickest babies to BC Women's Newborn ICU. ■