
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health Services
BC Cancer Agency
Northern Health

AGREEMENT SIGNED FOR CANCER CENTRE FOR THE NORTH

PRINCE GEORGE – Today the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North project took a major step forward with the signing of the final partnership agreement with Plenary Health.

The announcement was made on behalf of Health Services Minister Kevin Falcon by the Prince George-area MLAs.

“A tremendous milestone for patients living with cancer in northern B.C. has been reached,” said Prince George-Valemount MLA Shirley Bond. “For the first time ever, patients will have greater access to cancer-care services – such as radiation therapy – in Prince George. The opportunity to be close to your loved ones when receiving cancer treatment will undoubtedly make a difference in the quality of life for both patients and their families. I am proud of this achievement and eagerly await the completion of this cancer centre in 2012.”

The new, 5,000-square-metre (54,000-square-foot) Centre for the North will include two linear accelerators, which are used in the delivery of radiation therapy; one computerized-tomography (CT) simulator; a chemotherapy treatment unit; a pharmacy; general outpatient clinics; professional staff offices; and a parkade.

The Centre for the North is a critical component of the Northern Cancer Control Strategy (NCCS), a partnership of the Province, BC Cancer Agency (BCCA), the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) and Northern Health. The strategy is also focused on other capital developments, including:

- Renovations to the University Hospital of Northern B.C.(UHNBC) to accommodate a new six-bed oncology unit; an expansion of pathology, laboratory and diagnostic imaging services; and additional support and office space.
- Enhancement of cancer services in various Northern Health sites across the North.
- The acquisition of new equipment and information technology, such as telehealth capability, at these sites to accommodate expansion of community cancer clinics.

“One of our key project objectives was to use wood construction where practical,” said Prince George-Mackenzie MLA Pat Bell. “Construction of the cancer centre will use nearly 656,000 board feet of wood which, if laid end to end, would stretch from Prince George to Mackenzie.”

“As part of our commitment to environmental sustainability, the Centre for the North will be designed and built to achieve LEED Gold certification. One of the key design features will be a green, ‘living’ roof—the first of its kind in Prince George,” said Nechako Lakes MLA John Rustad.

“We are very pleased to finally be moving ahead with construction plans for our new Centre for the North in Prince George,” said Dr. David Levy, president, of the BCCA, an agency of the PHSA. “The centre will not only bring new services to the North, such as radiation therapy, but also provide co-ordination and support for the delivery of high-quality cancer care and research across the entire region.”

“The new facility will help to further enhance cancer care and treatment services across the region as part of the Northern Cancer Control Strategy,” said PHSA board chair Wynne Powell. “The agency’s – and PHSA’s – ongoing partnership with Northern Health and the Ministry of Health Services is helping ensure that northern residents have improved access to high-quality cancer care.”

“The Centre for the North will both complement and enhance the work of our current network of community cancer clinics in Northern Health sites across the region,” said Dr. Charles Jago, Northern Health board chair. “Both staff and residents can look forward to increased access to care, including teleoncology appointments with specialists and other regional service supports.”

“Construction of the Centre for the North will generate many positive economic benefits for Prince George and other northern communities through job creation and the purchase of local supplies and materials,” said Fraser-Fort George Regional Hospital District (FFGRHD) board chair Stephanie Killam. The board is providing up to \$4 million in additional capital toward the Northern Cancer Control Strategy.

The Centre for the North project is a partnership between the BC Cancer Agency and Plenary Health. The signing of the final agreement signals the end of negotiations and the finalization of a fixed-price, performance-based partnership agreement with Plenary Health to design, build, finance and maintain the cancer centre and parkade for a 30-year term. The benefit of a fixed-price agreement means that Plenary Health assumes all construction (cost and schedule), design, long-term maintenance and operational risks, as well as other costs related to the project. All clinical services will be funded by the Province and provided by the BCCA and Northern Health, in keeping with the principles of the Canada Health Act.

The total capital cost of Northern Cancer Control Strategy is \$102.8 million. The Centre for the North and the parkade will be delivered as a public-private partnership and the capital cost is fixed at \$69.9 million. Other capital components of the NCCS will be procured using the traditional delivery model and the capital costs are \$32.9 million. This includes a capital contribution from the FFGRHD of up to \$4 million toward the renovations to UHNBC, which will support the new cancer centre.

Construction will be undertaken in phases. The Centre for the North will displace over 200 parking spots on the UHNBC site; therefore, both temporary parking and a permanent parkade will be constructed prior to the groundbreaking for the cancer centre, scheduled for late summer 2010. Completion of the cancer centre is scheduled for September 2012.

The Province is making record investments in health-care facilities in northern B.C., including the Centre for the North and the \$297.9-million Fort St. John Hospital and Residential Care project. Over the next three years, British Columbia's health-care system will benefit from investments such as new medical equipment and modernized health facilities as part of a \$2.9-billion health-sector capital plan.

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A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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BC CANCER AGENCY CENTRE FOR THE NORTH

Major milestones for the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North project:

- July 18, 2008: Province of B.C. announces approval of project funding for the Northern Cancer Control Strategy
- July 31, 2008: Request for qualifications (RFQ) issued
- Dec. 15, 2008: Short-list announced
- March 20, 2009: Request for proposals (RFP) issued
- Oct. 20, 2009: Preferred proponent announced
- Dec. 18, 2009: Final agreement awarded
- Jan. 2010: Construction underway
- Late summer 2010: Groundbreaking for cancer centre
- September 2012: Construction completion

Project history:

- In March 2005 Northern Health and the BC Cancer Agency released a report entitled the 'Northern Cancer Control Strategy'. The report focused on expanding cancer control services in Northern BC in a co-ordinated way, but explicitly did not recommend a full-service cancer care centre for Prince George.
- In April 2005, following the release of 'Northern Cancer Control Strategy' report, the Province asked Dr. Charles Jago, president of the University of Northern BC, and Jeff Burghardt, Chair of Northern Health, to lead a comprehensive community consultation process on access to cancer care in the north.
- In November 2005 Northern Health and the BC Cancer Agency released a report entitled the 'Radiation Therapy Review', which explored the viability of a comprehensive cancer care centre in Prince George. It concluded that, provided significant challenges are addressed, a full-service cancer care centre for Northern BC "is both desirable and feasible."
- In September 2007 the Province endorsed the recommendations contained within the report developed by Dr. Charles Jago and Jeff Burghardt entitled 'Premier's Consultation for Improved Cancer Care in Northern B.C.', and committed to building a new regional cancer centre in Prince George.
- In July 2008, the Province of B.C. announced funding approval for the Northern Cancer Control Strategy, of which the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North is a key component.
- In July 2008, an RFQ was issued and a short list of private-sector partners was announced in December 2008.

- In March 2009, the RFP to design, build, finance and maintain the cancer centre was issued to the short list. After a thorough evaluation of proposals, Plenary Health was selected as the preferred proponent in October 2009.
- Final negotiations commenced and the competitive selection process concluded with the achievement of the final project agreement on Dec. 18, 2009.
- Construction of temporary parking at Alward Park and a permanent parkade will begin in January 2010. Groundbreaking for the Centre for the North is scheduled for late summer 2010, with completion in September 2012.

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