
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health Services
BC Cancer Agency
Northern Health

NORTHERN CANCER CONTROL STRATEGY MOVES FORWARD

PRINCE GEORGE – The implementation of the Northern Cancer Control Strategy took a major step forward today with the release of the request for proposals for the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North in Prince George.

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

“The BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North is a critical component of the Northern Cancer Control Strategy, providing residents of Prince George and northern B.C. with increased access to cancer treatment and diagnostic services closer to home,” said Prince George-Mount Robson MLA Shirley Bond. “We all know the importance of being close to your loved ones when undergoing treatment and this new cancer centre will make a remarkable difference in the quality of life for both patients and their families. As a life-long resident of Prince George I am very proud that we will have our own Northern Cancer Centre and will work extremely hard to deliver this in 2012.”

The Northern Cancer Control Strategy includes:

- BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North: two linear accelerators, used in the delivery of radiation therapy treatment; one computerized-tomography (CT) simulator; a chemotherapy treatment unit including 11 treatment stations; a pharmacy; general outpatient clinics; and professional staff offices;
- Renovations to Prince George Regional Hospital 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 up to 11 Northern Health sites in communities outside of Prince George, including new community cancer clinics opened in Quesnel and Vanderhoof;
- The acquisition of new equipment and information technology, such as telehealth capability, at these sites to accommodate expansion of community cancer clinics.

“In order to create a cancer centre that reflects and complements the City of Prince George and other northern communities, the design teams are being encouraged to use wood construction where practical,” said Prince George North MLA Pat Bell.

The release of the RFP is a significant stage in the procurement process. The three teams participating in the RFP are: Northern Gateway Health; Plenary Health; and Sequence Health. Once submissions to the RFP are received and evaluated, a preferred proponent will be selected and offered the opportunity to negotiate an agreement to design, build and finance the cancer centre, as well as provide facility maintenance services in the long run. The selection of the preferred proponent is expected to occur this coming fall

“The level of interest shown by the private sector in this project demonstrates that the North is an attractive place to invest and do business,” said Prince George-Omineca MLA John Rustad. “Construction of the cancer centre will stimulate growth and provide an economic boost to the region.”

Renovation at the Prince George Regional Hospital to expand the Diagnostic Imaging and Laboratory will start in summer 2009. Construction of the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North will start in the fall of 2009. The completion target for the entire project is 2012. The facility is being pursued as a public private partnership. All health services will be funded by the Province of British Columbia through the Provincial Health Services Authority, the BC Cancer Agency, and Northern Health, in keeping with the Canada Health Act.

“The Fraser Fort George Regional Hospital District is pleased to be supporting the Northern Cancer Control Strategy with the contribution of \$4 million for upgrades to Prince George Regional Hospital,” said FFGRHD chair Stephanie Killam.

The annual number of new cancer diagnoses in the north is projected to reach approximately 1,288 cases by 2015.

“The programs, services and networks that will be made possible by the Northern Cancer Control Strategy will not only deliver state-of-the-art cancer care, they will help to reduce the impact of cancer before it begins, by encouraging healthier lifestyles, and providing better access to cancer screening across the north,” said Brian Schmidt, BCCA interim president.

“Through this multi-faceted strategy, the Provincial Health Services Authority, the BC Cancer Agency and Northern Health are working together to ensure Northern residents are able to access full range of cancer services closer to home,” said Wynne Powell, PHSA board chair. “These include enhanced prevention programs, diagnostic tools, treatment options, patient supports, and palliative end of life care.”

“The new cancer centre in Prince George will be an important addition to the spectrum of cancer service available in the North,” said Dr. Charles Jago, Northern Health board chair. “It will strengthen the care delivery of local health professionals and build on the progress being made through the Northern Cancer Control Strategy.”

Currently, the BC Cancer Agency operates regional centres located in Surrey, Vancouver, Victoria, Kelowna and Abbotsford. When completed, the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North will become the sixth regional cancer centre in British Columbia.

Capital spending in the health sector will total \$2.5 billion over the next three years as part of the province’s \$14 billion infrastructure spending plan.

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