
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2010PREM0140-000870
July 29, 2010

Office of the Premier
Ministry of Health Services
BC Cancer Agency, Northern Health

CONSTRUCTION STARTS AT CANCER CENTRE FOR THE NORTH

PRINCE GEORGE – Premier Gordon Campbell and Health Services Minister Kevin Falcon, together with health and local government representatives, celebrated the start of construction on the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North today.

“With the start of construction for this new regional cancer centre, we are entering a new era of cancer care in the North,” said Premier Campbell. “The Centre for the North will offer cancer patients and their families a greater range of care options, including radiation therapy. The new service will eliminate the need for northern residents to travel south for treatment – saving them both time and money.”

The new, 5,000-square-metre (54,000-square-foot) Centre for the North will be the BC Cancer Agency’s sixth regional cancer centre. The new centre will include two linear accelerators, which will bring the delivery of radiation therapy to Northern B.C.

The total capital cost of the Northern Cancer Control Strategy (NCCS) is \$102.8 million, of which \$99.5 million is funded by the province. The Centre for the North project is being delivered as a public-private partnership with a capital cost of \$69.9 million and is expected to create around 445 direct construction jobs over the life of the project.

The BC Cancer Agency has contracted Plenary Health to design, build, finance and maintain the new centre for 30 years, ensuring it is built on time and on budget. The other capital costs of the NCCS include a contribution from the Fraser Fort George Regional Hospital District of up to \$4 million for renovations at the University Hospital of Northern British Columbia that will support the new cancer centre.

“The Centre for the North will bring critical cancer care closer to home for Northern British Columbians,” said Falcon. “This new facility, as part of the Northern Cancer Control Strategy, is part of our government’s ongoing commitment to ensuring B.C. remains a leader in cancer care, with some of the most favourable outcomes in Canada and North America.”

The centre will also include a computerized-tomography (CT) simulator; a chemotherapy treatment unit; a pharmacy; and general outpatient clinics. Key design features include the first green roof in Prince George, as well as extensive use of wood, reflecting one of the primary industries in the North.

“The majority of the project’s construction costs will be spent locally with more than 90 per cent of the trades coming from the North,” said Pat Bell, Prince George-Mackenzie MLA. “Additionally, the project will use nearly 656,000 board feet of wood, with an emphasis on local species available in B.C. and products manufactured in the province.”

The Centre for the North is a key component of the Northern Cancer Control Strategy, a partnership of the Province, BC Cancer Agency, Provincial Health Services Authority and Northern Health. The strategy is focused on reducing the impact of cancer in the North, and includes a range of prevention, detection and cancer care services.

“Today’s event marks an important milestone in the provision of cancer treatment for families in Northern B.C.,” said Shirley Bond, Prince George-Valemount MLA. “For decades we have been asking to find ways to keep cancer patients closer to home, surrounded by their loved ones. The Centre for the North is a critical component of a strategy that allows that to happen. We’ve been waiting for today for a very long time.”

“This new cancer centre will help to address cancer rates in the North and improve the quality of life for northern patients living with cancer,” said John Rustad, Nechako Lakes MLA.

The annual number of new cancer diagnoses in northern B.C. is projected to reach approximately 1,628 by 2020 – an increase of nearly 26 per cent from 2010.

“We are very excited to begin the construction phase of our newest cancer centre,” said Dr. David Levy, president of the BC Cancer Agency, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority. “The Centre for the North will help to improve the quality of cancer care for cancer patients living in the North through the co-ordination of new treatment and support services, as well as research activities.”

“A key focus of the Northern Cancer Control Strategy is enhanced care for local residents,” said Provincial Health Services Authority board chair Wynne Powell. “In addition to this new centre, we are committed, along with our strategy partners, to continue improving cancer services and programs around northern B.C.”

“The Centre for the North will be a key support and resource for Northern Health’s community cancer clinics located across the region,” said Dr. Charles Jago, Northern Health board chair. “We look forward to working with the BC Cancer Agency, through the Northern Cancer Control Strategy, to further enhance the continuum of cancer services we provide to northern patients and their families.”

For more details on cancer care services at the new BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North, visit the agency’s website at www.bccancer.bc.ca/RS/north. For more information about the construction of the centre, please visit www.centreforthenorth.plenaryprojects.com.

The provincial government is making record investments in health-care facilities in northern B.C. and throughout the province. 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 \$2.6-billion health-sector capital plan.

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