



NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier
Ministry of Health
BC Cancer Agency

Premier Clark opens BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North

PRINCE GEORGE – Premier Christy Clark today officially opened the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North, which will provide patients with the latest care and treatment closer to home beginning Nov. 1.

“Dealing with a cancer diagnosis can be hard to manage at the best of times and being away from your family can make it harder,” said Premier Clark. “Today’s opening is a significant milestone for northern B.C. because we can now provide cancer treatment closer to home. Patients in this region can be surrounded by the support of their friends and families so they can focus on a successful recovery.”

To ensure patients will receive the latest innovations in cancer care treatment, the centre is outfitted with state-of-the-art medical equipment, including two linear accelerators that will provide radiation therapy for the first time in northern B.C. Having this service available in Prince George will reduce cost and travel time for northerners, and offer services closer to home for patients and to their support network. The centre also will offer chemotherapy treatment, patient and family counselling, and nutrition support, among other cancer services.

“Northerners have been waiting decades for a cancer centre,” said Shirley Bond, Prince George-Valemount MLA. “The opening today means that we will finally be able to have expanded cancer-care options closer to home. I am so grateful that patients will be able to be surrounded by their families and friends as they wage their battle with cancer. This project has been one of my personal priorities as an MLA and I am thrilled that today has finally arrived.”

“Today marks an important milestone not only for the Northern Cancer Control Strategy project but a moment in Prince George history as radiation therapy will be delivered in the North for the very first time starting November 1,” said Pat Bell, MLA Prince George-Mackenzie.

“When the new centre in Prince George opens, patients and families across northern B.C. will be able to benefit from greater access to specialty cancer-care services,” said John Rustad, Nechako Lakes MLA.

At a total cost of \$91.5 million, the 5,000-square-metre (54,000-square-foot) BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North is part of the B.C. government's \$106-million Northern Cancer Control Strategy to improve cancer care throughout the north.

"Last year, I was diagnosed with stage 4 carcinoma of the lymph glands on the right side of my neck and underwent two months of extensive radiation and chemotherapies in Vancouver," said Peter Zimmer from Prince George who is now cancer free. "I celebrate the opening of the centre as it will provide local treatment for those of us who continue to live with the reality and the consequences of cancer."

The BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North also has a many unique green features, including a 'living roof' of local plants that will capture rainwater and provide insulation.

The Centre for the North is the sixth BC Cancer Agency Centre in the province.

"We're thrilled to open our sixth cancer centre in the province," said Dr. Max Coppes, president, BC Cancer Agency. "Along with bringing new services to the region, the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North will also help provide support for the delivery of co-ordinated cancer care and research across the province."

"The BC Cancer Agency is a leader in cancer care and research," said Wynne Powell, board chair, Provincial Health Services Authority. "Having a centre in the North will not only provide expert cancer care closer to northern residents but it also offers closer ties to the consistent and evidence-based cancer care and research that the BC Cancer Agency oversees, which has led to some of the best outcomes in the country."

As a component of the BC Cancer Agency's provincial cancer-control system for care and research, the centre will serve more than 750 patients a year and will work closely with community cancer clinics across the region.

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BACKGROUND

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BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North

About the Centre for the North

Construction on the Centre for the North began in July 2010 and the centre has been completed well within schedule and on budget. Over the past two years, more than 350 construction workers and more than 20 local companies have helped build the centre.

The Centre for the North was delivered at a total capital cost of \$91.5 million. Once construction was completed, the centre was outfitted with medical equipment and tools. The building is on target to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certification.

Construction was made possible by a public-private partnership. The BC Cancer Agency entered into a fixed-priced, performance-based agreement with the private partner Plenary Health to design, build, finance and maintain the centre for a term of 30 years. All clinical health services will be publicly funded and publicly provided, in accordance with the Canada Health Act.

The BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North is a key component of the Northern Cancer Control Strategy. The strategy is a joint partnership between the BC Cancer Agency, the Provincial Health Services Authority and Northern Health. It is focused on enhancing the continuum of cancer services in the north, including prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, and supportive and palliative care.

For more details on the new centre and the Northern Cancer Control Strategy, visit: www.northerncancerstrategy.ca

About the BC Cancer Agency

The BC Cancer Agency, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, is committed to reducing the incidence of cancer, reducing the mortality from cancer, and improving the quality of life of those living with cancer. It provides a comprehensive cancer control program for the people of British Columbia by working with community partners to deliver a range of oncology services, including prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, research, education, supportive care, rehabilitation and palliative care.

For more information, visit: www.bccancer.ca

Cancer rates throughout the world are growing, including in British Columbia. Northern Health, with a population of almost 300,000, is expected to have 1,330 cancer cases diagnosed in 2012 increasing to a projected 2,000 cases by 2025.

More than half of all cancers are preventable and lifestyle choices play an important role in the risk for cancer, as well as other chronic illnesses. Preventable lifestyle risks for causing cancer include tobacco and alcohol use; poor diet and nutrition; lack of physical activity, and sun exposure.

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