
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health Services
Northern Health

CONSTRUCTION UNDERWAY ON NEW FORT ST. JOHN HOSPITAL

FORT ST. JOHN – Ground was officially broken today on construction of the new Fort St. John Hospital and Residential Care project, with Peace River North MLA Pat Pimm, Senator Richard Neufeld, and representatives from Northern Health and the Peace River Regional Hospital District (PRRHD) on hand to mark the occasion.

“This new hospital and residential care project represents the first hospital replacement of this size in the North, and will be a crucial component of the continuum of care available to residents in the north east,” said Pimm, on behalf of Health Services Minister Kevin Falcon. “Not only are we building a brand new, state-of-the-art hospital, but we are also creating what will be a beautiful new home for our seniors.”

The new Fort St. John Hospital and Residential Care project is being constructed on a 40-acre parcel of land donated by the City of Fort St. John. It will include a 55-bed acute care hospital and a 123-bed residential care facility, along with an integrated services centre for food, laundry and materiel services. The new hospital will replace the aging existing facility, originally constructed in 1962. The 5,000-square-metre (54,000-square-foot) residential care development will replace the aging North Peace Care Centre in Fort St. John and add new residential care capacity in the area.

“It is very exciting to be moving forward on this project,” said Senator Neufeld, who served as chair on the Fort St. John Hospital Committee. “The new hospital will increase the number of acute care beds to 55, from 44 at the current facility. Fort St. John is growing rapidly, and these additional beds are needed to help accommodate the community’s future health care needs.”

The hospital will also include two new operating rooms and an endoscopy suite and incorporate single-room maternity care. The hospital and long-term care facilities will be designed to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certification, as part of the Province’s commitment to developing green, environmentally sustainable infrastructure.

In addition, the emergency department at the new hospital will be about two-and-a-half times larger than the ER at the existing hospital, to allow for an enhanced short stay function, for patients requiring less than a 24-hour stay. The clinical decision unit has also been enhanced to allow for monitoring and decision making on how to address patient issues, such as diagnosis, cast room function, cardiac testing, home visits, etc.

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The balance of this space addresses all the necessary functions the current ER has, while reflecting a newer, more updated patient flow approach.

“The population in the Fort St. John area has grown exponentially since the existing hospital was first constructed,” said Northern Health board chair Dr. Charles Jago. “This project has been one of Northern Health’s top priorities, and we are extremely pleased to see shovels in the ground.”

The project is a public private partnership between Northern Health and ISL Health. Today’s groundbreaking signals the end of negotiations and the finalization of a fixed-price contract with ISL Health to design, build, finance and maintain the new facilities over a fixed-term of 30 years. In addition to constructing the new facilities, ISL Health will be responsible for building maintenance, lifecycle repair and renewal, and project financing over the life of the contract. All clinical services will be provided by the Province through Northern Health.

“This project will benefit our local community, and will provide a positive working environment for staff and volunteers,” said PRRHD chairperson Karen Goodings. “The north east of B.C. is a beautiful, welcoming place, and this new hospital and residential care facilities will become a model of excellence in rural health care.”

The total project cost is \$297.9 million. This includes \$98 million from the PRRHD, which includes a contribution of \$95.7 million to the project and \$2.3 million of PRRHD financing costs. The fixed-price contract makes certain that ISL Health assumes all construction (cost and schedule), design, long-term maintenance and operational risks, as well as other costs related to the project. ISL Health began preliminary site work in June following the signing of an early works agreement to allow crews to maximize the summer construction season in the north. Completion of the project is targeted for spring 2012.

“This is a momentous day for our community – with the start of construction we will begin to see our collective vision for improved health care taking shape,” said Mayor Bruce Lantz. “Today’s announcement marks an important stride toward improving our local economy through the creation of much-needed construction jobs and the purchase of local supplies and materials.”

The new Fort St. John Hospital and Residential Care project is the cornerstone of the Province’s commitment to revitalize health care services in the north. Other investments into the health of northern British Columbians include the Northern Cancer Control Strategy, which includes a new BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North in Prince George and renovations to Prince George Regional Hospital, and the development of a medical school at the University of Northern British Columbia.

The Fort St. John Hospital and Residential Care project is part of an overall, three-year, \$14-billion capital infrastructure program, which includes \$2.5 billion for capital spending in the health sector, supported by the Province, that will create up to 88,000 jobs and help build vital public infrastructure in every region of B.C. Visit www.gov.bc.ca/infrastructure for more information.

BACKGROUND

FORT ST. JOHN HOSPITAL AND RESIDENTIAL CARE PROJECT

The Fort St. John Hospital and Residential Care project will bring together a rural acute care hospital and residential care facility to a single site. This co-location of facilities will reduce travelling time for users and staff, and is in close proximity to the airport – a travel time of approximately seven minutes. The new facilities will be located on a portion of a 16-hectare “greenfield” site, located between 86th Street and the 79th Street Bypass road.

The facilities will be linked together by an indoor passage-way, eliminating the need to venture outdoors when transferring patients for health care services. The integration of the hospital and residential care facilities will allow patients, doctors, hospital staff and visitors to flow seamlessly back and forth, reducing exposure during the winter season, when climatic conditions can be severe.

The hospital is a two-storey, 15,000 square metre (approximately 161,459 square feet) building that will relocate, expand and modernize acute care services and programs currently provided at the existing hospital in the City of Fort St. John. Features of the new facility include:

- 55 acute care beds.
- Endoscopy suite.
- Two state-of-the-art operating rooms plus a procedure room.
- Ambulatory clinics, to include cancer care clinics and haemodialysis.
- Medical and surgical inpatient rooms.
- Intensive care unit.
- Separate maternity entrance and ward, with single-room maternity care.
- Emergency department two-and-a-half times the size of the ER at the current facility.

The residential care building is a two-storey, 7,500 square metre (approximately 80,729 square feet) building that will expand and modernize care services for seniors. Features of the new facility include:

- 123 residential beds.
- Palliative, psycho-geriatric and special care units.
- Elder friendly design and features.
- Individual rooms with en-suite bathrooms.
- Every room has a view to the exterior, with easy access to outdoor courtyards.
- Convenient access to diagnostic services in the acute care hospital.
- Retail and community meeting space.
- Shared daily living and dining space.

Combined design and innovation highlights of the new facilities include:

- Expansive use of windows for natural light, views and access to the outdoors to promote a healing environment and provide patients with a connection to nature.
- The facilities have been designed using the universal grid with standardized room configurations and the accompanying advantages of modularization – a proven innovation in health care that promotes maximum flexibility that allows for future expansion, while retaining clinical adjacencies with minimal disruption to existing operations.
- Innovative measures towards sustainability: An innovative engineered laminated timber structural deck system has been developed in partnership with a Canfor Mill, located in Fort St. John, for the construction of the residential care building. The structural deck system uses three layers of cross laminated 2' x 6' beetle-killed pine wood.
- Approximately six hectares of the 16 hectare site will not be developed, thereby providing future opportunities for expansion.
- The facilities will be built to achieve LEED Gold Certification. The facilities are designed to be high performance, energy-efficient and a healthy building.
- A spiritual room.

Northern Medical Program:

The new hospital will also include academic space for the Northern Medical Program (NMP), a partnership program between the Faculty of Medicine at the University of British Columbia and University of Northern British Columbia. The NPM was established in 2004 to address the shortage of doctors practicing in northern B.C. communities. Students and residents that will be placed in Fort St. John working towards their medical degrees or residency will benefit from the onsite location and convenient access to the hospital and residential care facilities. The academic space will also be used for simulation facilities and other health professional education such as nursing.

Construction Schedule:

Construction of the new facilities is now underway. An early works agreement was initiated in June for this project to maximize construction during the short construction season in Fort St. John. There are, on average, only 100 frost free days in Fort St. John and certain elements of construction must cease during the winter months. A schedule and a work plan that is responsive to the climate in Fort St. John has been implemented that will ensure the project is completed on-time by spring of 2012.

BACKGROUND

FORT ST. JOHN HOSPITAL AND RESIDENTIAL CARE PROJECT

Major milestones for the Fort St. John Hospital and Residential Care project to date:

- Province funding approval for the project – April 22, 2008.
- Request for qualifications (RFQ) – May 6, 2008.
- Request for proposals (RFP) – October 17, 2008.
- Preferred proponent announced – March 31, 2009.
- Early works agreement – June 2009.
- Contract award – July 16, 2009.
- Construction groundbreaking event – July 22, 2009.

Project history:

- The official groundbreaking is July 22, 2009.
- After a rigorous competitive selection process and negotiations, the procurement process concluded with the final project agreement executed July 16, 2009, between Northern Health and ISL Health.
- In June 2009, an early works agreement was initiated for the project to allow preliminary site work to begin to take advantage of the short construction season in Fort St. John.
- ISL Health, the private partner, was selected as the preferred proponent in March 2009.
- By October 2008, an RFP was issued to the market place to design, build, finance and maintain the new state-of-the-art hospital and residential care facilities.
- In April 2008, the Province of B.C. announced funding approval for the Fort St. John Hospital and Residential Care project.
- A project proposal was submitted to Ministry of Health Services in August 2008, defining the demand for expanded health care services and meeting the growing need for residential care for seniors.
- Northern Health responded to these challenges through its 2007-2008 Strategic Plan, which committed to improving the health of all people in northern B.C.
- The population of north-eastern British Columbia is projected to increase by 21 per cent to approximately 84,000 by 2028.
- In 2005, Northern Health embarked on an extensive review of the Fort St. John Hospital, its physical plant and its capacity for further expansion. The results were clear: the current hospital would not adequately meet the needs of Fort St. John and nearby communities over the next decade in its current form.
- In years 1999 and 2000, minor renovations were undertaken to improve existing services and to add additional patient services.

- In 1976, a significant renovation and expansion of the facility was completed.
- The original Fort St. John Hospital was constructed in 1962.

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