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NLIS 2
 April 19, 2005
 (Health and Community Services)

Government improves cancer services in central region

Premier Danny Williams and Loyola Sullivan, acting Minister of Health and Community Services, today announced a \$1.55 million investment to improve cancer services in the central region.

"Based on recent consultations in the central region with community groups and the new regional integrated health authority our government will proceed with the construction of an extension to the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre for a new cancer treatment area in Grand Falls-Windsor and re-develop space at James Paton Hospital for a new cancer clinic in Gander. This investment will bring the cancer facilities in the central region to comparable and consistent levels with cancer services across the province," said Premier Williams. "Cancer is a devastating disease and we want to ensure that cancer patients in the central region and across the province have access to the best quality of life possible throughout the course of their treatment."

Construction will begin this year on a 4,200 square foot extension on the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre in Grand Falls-Windsor for a new cancer treatment area providing greater privacy to patients, enhanced space for patient care in a more aesthetically pleasing environment. Renovations will also begin to re-develop the existing cancer clinic at James Paton Hospital in Gander which currently faces similar space limitations.

"We are taking action to improve the lives of people with cancer today and committed to continuing the fight against cancer over the long term. With the new integrated health authorities in place, this strategic investment addresses the broader needs of cancer patients and services in the entire central region," said Minister Sullivan. "Additionally, as national reports suggest, cancer rates are rising and these expansions will accommodate the future growth in patient volumes."

Today's announcement enhances government's recent Budget initiatives to strengthen cancer services across the province. Budget 2005 provided over \$16 million to reduce wait times for cancer care, give patients greater access to chemotherapy and radiation and improve early detection of cancer with new diagnostic equipment including mammography and endoscopy units, ultrasounds, an MRI and CT Scanners. - FMM ?

"This is an exceptional day for cancer patients, their families and all residents of central Newfoundland who will see their wish become a reality," said Ray Hunter, MHA for Windsor-Springdale. "I know the community will embrace this decision and I look forward to seeing this initiative through to its completion."

"It is extremely important for cancer patients to have comfortable surroundings and services close to support mechanisms as they wage a war against debilitating illness. I'm pleased residents from Gander and the surrounding area will benefit from these enhancements," said Kevin O'Brien, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier and the MHA for Gander.

"Many people have advocated for these new initiatives, including our local MHAs and the Minister of Health and Community Services John Ottenheimer," added Premier Williams. "Our government has taken this issue very seriously, done the necessary consultations with the new health authority, and is pleased to proceed with these projects."

Funding for both initiatives has been identified within the Department of Health and Community Services' 2005-06 budget. Construction of both projects will begin this fiscal year with an anticipated completion in the 2006-07 fiscal year.

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2005 04 19

12:00 p.m.



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