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IH celebrates start of construction for permanent MRI space at EKRH

CRANBROOK – Residents of East Kootenay are one step closer to having increased access to diagnostic testing within the region. Construction has started on the addition to East Kootenay Regional Hospital (EKRH), which will be home to a new, permanent MRI service.

Rendek Group of Companies was selected as the general contractor overseeing the construction of the new MRI space – an approximately 200 square metre (2,150 square foot) addition on the east side of EKRH adjacent to the intensive care unit. Construction is expected to be complete in the spring of 2018, and the new MRI unit operational in the summer.

Today, East Kootenay residents receive MRI testing at a shared mobile MRI unit that comes to East Kootenay Regional Hospital for one week every four weeks. The new unit will mean the service is a permanent resource.

“We recognize the challenges residents face when they must travel to access health services. This permanent MRI will improve patient care by reducing the need for patients to travel or and will decrease the waiting time for an appointment,” says Interior Health Board Chair Dr. Doug Cochrane. “The permanent installation in Cranbrook also allows the mobile unit to be deployed for additional testing elsewhere in Interior Health.”

The total investment for the new MRI, which covers the cost of the machine and the renovations to EKRH, is \$5.65 million. The Ministry of Health through Interior Health is contributing \$2.21 million and Kootenay East Regional Hospital District (KERHD) \$2.14 million to the MRI project, with the East Kootenay Foundation for Health (EKFH) and the Cranbrook Health Care Auxiliary covering the remaining \$1.3 million.

“Our contribution to the permanent MRI in Cranbrook reflects the commitment from all our directors and our communities to investments that support access to a broad range of health-care services within the East Kootenay,” says KERHD Board Chair Dean McKerracher. “The Board is pleased to see that construction work on this important project is under way, and we look forward to the start of this enhanced service next year.”

The enthusiasm around the permanent MRI and the generosity of East Kootenay communities allowed the EKFH to achieve its 18-month campaign goal of \$650,000 in just five months.



“We were overwhelmed with the community support we received for the MRI,” says Wes Rogers, EKFH Chair. “Charitable donations came from all over, from young children all the way to large corporations. So many people recognized the need for a permanent MRI and responded with tremendous generosity.”

The \$650,000 in funding from the Auxiliary has also already been secured.

“The ongoing generosity of local residents and shoppers at our Thrift Store and Gift Shop, and our other fundraising efforts allowed us to meet our commitment to this important enhancement to diagnostic imaging services. All of our work is made possible through the dedicated efforts of our amazing volunteers and I can’t thank them enough,” says Bonnie Close, CHCA president. “Auxiliary members talk to area residents every day who are excited about the addition of the permanent MRI and the benefits of having an enhanced local service. We can’t wait for it to open.”

Background

MRI, or Magnetic Resonance Imaging, is a safe and painless test that uses a magnetic field and radio waves to produce detailed pictures of the body's organs and structures. MRIs are used to diagnose a number of medical conditions, including abnormalities of the brain, as well as tumours, cysts and soft-tissue injuries in other parts of the body. MRI scans are important diagnostic tools that do not use radiation; however, other types of diagnostic imaging – x-ray, ultrasound, or computed tomography (CT) – are more appropriate tools for many types of medical conditions.

In addition to the current mobile MRI unit (which also provides service in Penticton and Trail), Interior Health has MRI units at Kelowna General Hospital and Royal Inland Hospital in Kamloops. Permanent MRI machines have been approved for Penticton Regional Hospital and Vernon Jubilee Hospital, which are expected to become operational in 2019.