



NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health
Interior Health

Planning to get underway to add beds in Polson Tower

VERNON – Health Minister Michael de Jong today announced that detailed planning will begin immediately to add hospital beds in Polson Tower at Vernon Jubilee Hospital (VJH), with funds set aside as part of Budget 2012.

“Our government is committed to providing the peace of mind of knowing that there will be a hospital bed available when your loved one needs it most,” said de Jong. “Adding new beds in Polson Tower at Vernon Jubilee will help a very busy hospital to provide better care for families living in Greater Vernon.”

Final plans – which include type of beds, number of beds, scope of work, timeframe and estimated cost – will be announced once the planning process is complete. Government expects construction to be underway by spring 2013.

“Since I was first elected in 2009, this has been my top priority. I’ve been working constantly with local residents and the health minister regarding capacity issues at Vernon Jubilee Hospital,” said Vernon-Monashee MLA Eric Foster. “Today’s announcement is great news for patients and families in the region, and the result of hundreds of hours of dedicated effort.”

Today’s announcement that additional hospital beds are coming follows the official opening of the Polson Tower at VJH in October 2011. The \$180-million Polson Tower added 16,815 square metres (181,000 square feet) of space to the VJH site. The two unfinished floors were funded by the North Okanagan Columbia Shuswap Regional Hospital District (NOCSRHD) and were designed for future patient beds.

“We’re seven months into providing patient care in the new Polson Tower at VJH,” said Norman Embree, Interior Health board chair. “Capacity continues to be a concern in the community and it’s important that we focus on all of the pieces of the puzzle. While this includes more beds, it also means supporting healthy communities and ensuring those who no longer require acute care have access to the appropriate services and settings when needed.”

“Working in a new state-of-the-art facility like Polson Tower makes a huge difference for health professionals, patients and their families,” said Yolanda Short, manager of the women's and children's health services department at VJH. “Building additional beds allows us to address congestion and enhance our service for the residents of the North Okanagan.”

More space has allowed for the expansion of operating rooms and the emergency department. Polson Tower also houses a new maternity/paediatrics ward with direct links to operating rooms and expanded ambulatory care and outpatient clinics.

The expanded and modernized facilities provide a better environment for patients and staff. A series of programs and services have also been modernized and consolidated to improve patient care.

“Additional beds at Vernon Jubilee Hospital will help to meet the growing demand today and in the years to come,” said NOCSRHD chair Rhona Martin. “Ensuring hospital care is available when needed is an important priority.”

Since 2001, more than \$7 billion has been invested in health capital projects in British Columbia. British Columbia's health-care system will benefit from \$2.3 billion in health-sector capital investments over the coming three years, including the Interior Heart & Surgical Centre in Kelowna and today's announcement that additional beds are coming to Polson Tower.

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