

Nanaimo Regional Hospital District Priority Capital Projects (Fact Sheet)

The Nanaimo Regional Hospital District (NRHD) is committed to advancing key health care infrastructure for the Central and North Island, including a high acuity unit, a new patient tower, a cancer centre and a cardiac catheterization lab to be located at the Nanaimo Regional General Hospital (NRGH) and a new long-term care facility.

The Projects

These projects were identified by the Province and Island Health in consultation with health care providers and experts and are included in Island Health's major capital plan. The NRHD is committed to advancing key health care infrastructure for the Central and North Island and we have confirmed our own commitment to these 5 projects as priorities for the region.

1. **New patient tower** (concept plan not yet approved) at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital (NRGH) will provide new patient rooms, surgical spaces, labs, and other programs and services to improve care and infection control.
2. **New Cancer Centre** (concept plan approved) at NRGH will provide more technically complex treatments, clinical trials, and research as well as other specialty clinics such as gynecology, dermatology, heredity, and brachytherapy. It will increase capacity for chemotherapy and add radiation therapy for residents of the Central/North Island. Business planning is underway and will determine the scope of the project.
3. **New Cardiac Catheterization Lab** (no mandate from Province) at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital (planning not started) – provide cardiac catheterization (insertion of stents, balloons, etc.) plus coronary and cardiac angiography (diagnostic imaging).
4. **New High Acuity Unit** (under construction) at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital (approved) – 12-bed facility developed as part of the new intensive care unit being built (construction start – June 2023) to provide care for critically ill patients.
5. **New Long-term Care Home** (pending update from Province) – provide public long-term care beds for seniors. The business plan has been submitted to the Ministry of Health.

The Need

The NRHD is grateful to the B.C. government for approving the HAU and the concept plan for the cancer center. However, there is still an urgent need to address critical health service gaps, including the need for a new patient tower and cardiac catheterization lab at NRGH and a new long-term care home. The medical demands of the Central and North Island's will only continue to increase due to a rapidly growing and aging population. Given the positive progress on the HAU and new cancer center we urge the Province to commit to similar action on the other projects. According to our medical leaders, the demands are staggering and continuing to increase. The shortage of appropriate health care facilities and specialized services is reaching a critical point.

The RDN has one of the fastest growing and oldest populations in Canada, and these trends are expected to continue. Our population increased by 9.4% in five years, twice the national rate of 5.2%, and is growing faster than the population of the South Island. Nearly 30% of RDN residents are 65 years or older vs. just over 21% for B.C. overall.

Beyond the RDN, the population and complexity of medical needs across the entire Central and North Island are also growing. Our health system also serves the needs of many vulnerable populations, including 80% of the Island's Indigenous people, who often live in remote communities and experience increased barriers, poorer health status, and have unique health needs and considerations.

Nanaimo Regional General Hospital (NRGH) is the designated tertiary hospital providing specialized services to patients from across the Central and North Island. The patient tower, built in 1963, is structurally and functionally obsolete, at high risk for system failure, and can no longer meet best practices and modern medical standards, including prevention of infectious diseases. Due to operating at overcapacity, patients are often cared for in inappropriate areas of the hospital.

The population served by NRGH (over 450,000 people) is the largest in Canada without a cardiac catheterization lab. Victoria is the only center on Vancouver Island with this type of facility. Central and North Island cardiac patients must travel to Victoria for heart care which is not available north of the Malahat. Patients might also be sent to Vancouver. Likewise, oncology services are under-resourced. While NRGH provides chemotherapy, Central and North Island cancer patients must travel to Victoria and/or Vancouver for radiation treatment.

With a significant shortage of long-term care beds in the region and long waitlists, many seniors end up in hospital who would be better cared for in facilities dedicated to their complex care needs.

The Benefits

These specialized and enhanced services are essential for providing Central and North Island residents with appropriate, patient-centred, and high-quality health care, when and where they need it. The patient tower will provide critical services to improve care for our patients, optimize wellness, and improve infection control. A cardiac catheterization lab would ensure timely diagnosis and access to interventional cardiology intended to address heart problems and prevent the need for surgery. A new long-term care home will enable local seniors to move out of hospitals, freeing up acute care beds at NRGH, and allowing seniors to age with appropriate care and dignity in or near their home communities.

Vital investments now into these services will benefit our communities for decades to come, improve the standard of care and help improve health outcomes north of the Malahat, as well as health system performance. It is critical these projects move to increase local health system capacity, reduce pressure on health services in other regions, free up beds at NRGH, and provide better value for public health care dollars.

Alignment with B.C. Government Priorities

These key projects will support the provincial government in delivering on its commitments to improving health care for all British Columbians, including strengthening our public health care system with new and modernized hospitals, improving cancer care, addressing service gaps and improving access to medical appointments for rural and remote communities, and delivering appropriate care for seniors through investments in new public long-term care homes.

NRHD's Funding Commitment

The NRHD has put in place funding mechanisms for its share of the project capital costs and is ready to proceed. We have committed to fund 40% of the NRGH patient tower replacement, cardiac catheterization lab, new high acuity unit, and new long-term care facility. Because these projects are vital for our region, we have developed a long-term financial strategy, taken steps to support our financial contribution through a recent regional tax increase, and are prepared to borrow the difference. We ask the province to prioritize the remaining projects and commit the necessary funding to ensuring they are built.