



IMAGE COURTESY OF ROYAL COLUMBIAN HOSPITAL FOUNDATION

It's Our Time Under the Lights

Traditionally B.C.'s unsung hero of healthcare, Royal Columbian Hospital has begun an unprecedented and transformational redevelopment

Royal Columbian Hospital is one of B.C.'s top critical care hospitals, serving a population of more than 1.8 million people — one in three British Columbians.

Hospital upgrades are always an important undertaking, as well as being elaborate in terms of logistics. But the impact of the three-phase, \$1.35-billion improvement for New Westminster-based Royal Columbian Hospital is such that it recently prompted Tom Sparrow, the hospital's redevelopment chief project officer, to remark, "What's taking place is spectacular and of significant benefit to New Westminster, Metro Vancouver and all of B.C."

That's because the upgrades – which

comprise the largest government-funded health care redevelopment project ever approved in B.C. – are for the only hospital in the province with Level 1 trauma, cardiac care, neurosurgery, high-risk obstetrics, neonatal intensive care, and acute mental-health care services, all on one site. Royal Columbian is B.C.'s busiest cardiac care centre; it is the only hospital in B.C. that cares for certain critically ill pregnant women and their unborn children; and it is one of the province's busiest emergency departments and medical heliports.

There are many other distinctions to

Royal Columbian, which is also the province's oldest hospital (established in 1862); but the bottom line is that with it serving about one third of the total population of B.C., the upgrades – Phase 1 of which is already underway – will take these services to stratospheric new heights.

As far as Royal Columbian site medical director and critical care physician Dr. Steve Reynolds is concerned, the upgrades are also drawing much-needed attention to the hospital's achievements. "I came here eight years ago and was struck by how such a talented team of health care professionals

did amazing work and yet weren't inclined to draw attention to themselves," he says. "It's an admirable quality, but unfortunately it tends to compromise Royal Columbian when it comes to advocating for funding or the distribution of resources."

So how will \$1.35 billion make Royal Columbian better than it already is? For starters, the first phase will add a new mental health and substance use wellness centre to the infrastructure, consisting of 75 beds (an increase from the current 30) as well as a new, more efficient energy plant and an advanced fibre-optic network.

Phase 2, which will unfold between 2020 and 2024, will see the construction of a new acute-care tower to provide more beds, a new and larger emergency department, four more operating rooms, more MRI capacity, plus equipment and site enhancements.

The final phase, which will commence in 2023, includes upgrades to areas in the Health Care Centre and Columbia Tower to support the beds and services added in Phase 2. It includes expansion of clinical support spaces, conversion of four-bed inpatient rooms, and improvements and expansions to the pediatric and neonatal intensive care units.

Sparrow notes that Royal Columbian is

also respected as a teaching hospital in partnership with the University of British Columbia and other institutions: "We have upwards of 1,400 UBC residents and other students working here per year and that, too, will increase in size."

The amount of planning and collaboration required to move this project forward is enormous, with the provincial government, Fraser Health, and the Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation responsible for funding – the latter currently fundraising in order to make multi-million dollar contributions to the three phases. "It's interesting to think that donations from industries and the community allowed the original Royal Columbian to be built in 1862 for just under \$3,400, and here we are relying on benefactors again," says Foundation president and CEO Jeff Norris. "The response we've received is overwhelming: we've already raised one-third of the \$9 million we set as the Foundation's goal for Phase 1 of redevelopment, thanks to a \$1 million donation from BMO Financial Group to really get the ball rolling."

As for determining the actual components of the upgrades, "A massive number of stakeholders are working closely with architects and builders, with three or four

iterations of every element being carefully considered before one is finalized," according to Sparrow.

Sue Paish, the Foundation's redevelopment campaign cabinet chair, says, "Royal Columbian's redevelopment teams are being visionary, practical, courageous and confident in planning both the bricks and mortar elements of the new hospital and, most importantly, the service delivery plan." To which Reynolds adds, "Our culture, our processes, how we flow patients through the system – everything is being analyzed to create even better efficiencies than we have now."

Paish continues, "This process is vital, because health care needs are evolving. To take just one example, the population of seniors we serve will double in 20 years, and there are plenty of other changing demographics we must be ready for."

While various public figures associated with the upgrades expressed their excitement about the project when it was first announced in 2017, New Westminster mayor Jonathan Cote most accurately summarizes the sentiment by remarking, "Finally, the sleeping giant that is Royal Columbian is getting the attention it deserves. We're very much looking forward to how the future will unfold." ■



Royal Columbian Hospital is B.C.'s busiest cardiac care centre, performing complex open-heart surgery as well as minimally invasive procedures to open blocked arteries and replace failing heart valves.

IMAGE COURTESY OF JERALD WALLISER



Royal Columbian Hospital's site medical director, Dr. Steve Reynolds (*left*). Royal Columbian's Variety Neonatal Intensive Care Unit cares for some of the province's sickest and most premature babies (*top*). The preliminary concept for the new Acute Care Tower in Phase 2 of Royal Columbian Hospital's redevelopment.

Research and Tech Hub is the Best IDEA

Upgrades to any institution can be a catalyst for related economic opportunities in the community and the three-phase undertaking at Royal Columbian Hospital is a great example. It has inspired a City of New Westminster task force in partnership with the Fraser Health Authority and the Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation to develop a medically related research and technology hub known as IDEA Centre.

Mark Allison, manager, strategic initiatives and sustainability for the City of New Westminster, says, "This is the perfect time to plan for such an initiative. A few years ago, a study revealed that Royal Columbian generated \$526 million annually in economic activity in B.C., most of it in Greater Vancouver, and the upgraded hospital will cause that figure to climb to over \$747 million."

IDEA Centre will transform the precinct surrounding Royal Columbian into a mecca for research and technology advancements and post-secondary partnerships with the goal of improving healthcare in the region

and farther afield.

IDEA Centre will encourage globally recognized medical talent to serve as clinicians, educators and researchers at Royal Columbian, as well as partner with institutions such as the University of British Columbia. In turn, this will result in ongoing medical and health sciences vacancies being filled; increase the presence of higher education institutions at Royal Columbian; generate research leading to next-generation medical and life sciences technologies and practices; and perhaps even provide a new model for health districts.

Allison notes, "Research and innovation is really the key to the future, and in this regard our IDEA Centre is not without precedent: B.C.'s Surrey Memorial Hospital developed a research hub when that facility was being expanded a few years ago, and similar examples abound in other parts of Canada and the U.S."

New Westminster Mayor Jonathan Cote says a special employment area around Royal Columbian has already been designated, and an initial hub could be

established within a few years. "This is an entirely appropriate development for us, as Royal Columbian is by far New Westminster's biggest employer: one in five jobs in this city pertain to health care."

Allison concludes, "Combined with thousands of new health care professionals coming into Royal Columbian thanks to the upgrades, IDEA Centre will be a huge economic engine that will also spur related services and amenities in New Westminster." ■

OUR TIME IS NOW

At Royal Columbian Hospital, the most seriously ill and injured get their greatest chance at life. We deliver critical care to as much as one-third the population of the province. No other hospital in B.C. delivers our range of services at this high level of care.

With an unprecedented redevelopment and expansion now underway at B.C.'s longest-serving hospital, the moment to advance our critical care future has arrived. Our fundraising campaign will ensure that our world-class medical teams have the cutting-edge tools and technology to provide exceptional care.

Visit rchfoundation.com/critical for more information or to make your donation today.



THESE STARS SHINE FOR ROYAL COLUMBIAN HOSPITAL.

OUR TIME IS NOW.

Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation is honoured to present our capital campaign cabinet, which unites leaders from across our most critical industries, communities and partnerships. With an unprecedented redevelopment and expansion of Royal Columbian now underway, we are committed to supporting this \$1.35 billion multi-year, multi-phase project, every step of the way.

The time? Definitely now. The opportunity? Far-reaching, game-changing, transformative improvements in how critical care is shaped and delivered in BC.

When it's critical, it's Royal Columbian.
rchfoundation.com/critical

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