



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Ministry of Health Services and PHSA invest \$4 million in state-of-the-art MRI at BC Children's Hospital**

*Complementary strategy will address Children's MRI wait list*

**Vancouver, B.C.** – Together with the Ministry of Health Services, the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) today officially unveiled a new \$4 million state-of-the-art MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scanner at BC Children's Hospital and a strategy to address MRI wait times for children who need non-urgent scans.

“The acquisition of this advanced technology is a significant step forward because the scanner will increase both the number of patients that can be seen and the range of imaging capabilities,” said Minister of Health Services Colin Hansen.

“Last week, Premier Campbell announced nearly \$21 million to improve patient access across the province. Today, the PHSA is announcing a complementary strategy designed to ensure that more B.C. children who need it have access to the new scanner. All of these efforts are about targeting health care dollars to direct patient care.”

The PHSA, which is responsible for a range of province-wide specialty health care services and facilities, including BC Children's Hospital, has dedicated \$280,000 of the funding to implement a strategy to help address the wait list for children needing non-urgent MRI examinations. This strategy includes hiring additional technologists and extending operating hours for the department. Provisions for additional pediatric anesthesiologists and nurses will also be required. This initiative will begin to be implemented next month, and is designed to increase the average number of patients seen from eight to 12 per day, reducing the wait list for non-urgent MRI examinations to 100 within six to eight months.

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The scanner is the first of its type in Canada and replaces a 12-year-old machine that performed an average of 215 scans each month. The new technology will enable more accurate diagnosis with a range of imaging capabilities that was not previously available in this province and it is more efficient, allowing Children's to better respond to the increased demand for MRI services.

"As the tertiary pediatric health care centre for B.C., investing in this technology is an important step in ensuring access to care, particularly for children suffering from neurological disorders, cancer, and cardiovascular disease," said Dr. Gordon Culham, Director of Radiology at BC Children's Hospital. "But it is important to remember two points about children who require MRI scans. Urgent cases are always seen as quickly as possible so they will always be at the front of the queue. Many children also require sedation in order to receive a proper scan and this requires a dedicated team of Children's Hospital staff, including radiologists, anesthesiologists, nurses, and technologists, to work together."

In addition to extending the MRI hours of operation, the investment will assist Children's in hiring and training staff, including radiation technologists.

Replacing the old scanner required a significant effort. The project involved removing the outdated unit and upgrading the space technically and physically, in order to accommodate the new scanner. Calibration, testing and staff training were also required. In order to limit the disruption caused by this 12-week shutdown, Children's arranged for urgent and emergent scans to be performed at BC Cancer Agency, with Vancouver General Hospital as further back up. A dedicated Children's Hospital MRI team worked with BC Cancer Agency and Vancouver General staff to provide the specialized pediatric expertise and care required for these scans.

*BC Children's Hospital, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, provides expert care for the province's most seriously ill or injured children, including newborns and adolescents. For more information please visit [www.cw.bc.ca](http://www.cw.bc.ca).*

*The Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) plans, manages and evaluates selected specialty and province-wide health care services across BC, working with the five geographic health authorities to deliver province-wide solutions that improve the health of British Columbians. For more information please visit [www.phsa.ca](http://www.phsa.ca).*

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