

September 8, 2010

132 more hospital beds opening in Calgary

CALGARY – Alberta Health Services will open 132 new beds in three Calgary hospitals this fall to increase access to a wide range of patient-care services.

The beds will open at the Foothills Medical Centre (FMC), Peter Lougheed Centre (PLC) and Rockyview General Hospital (RGH) at a cost of \$15.7 million annually. A combination of 153 full- and part-time nursing and care staff is being hired to support these new beds.

‘When we announced a first-of-its-kind, five-year funding plan for health services in this year’s budget, we wanted to see an immediate, positive impact on patient care,’ said Gene Zwozdesky, Minister of Health and Wellness. ‘These additional beds are another great example of how this funding is helping to improve access and quality of care for Albertans.’

‘Opening these beds allows us to expand the range of care options we provide,’ said Brenda Huband, Senior Vice President, Alberta Health Services. ‘We are increasing access to hospital beds, but we also need to care for those patients with needs that are not met with traditional acute care units, including patients who need long-term support, those gaining the strength and skills to return to the community, and those who need palliative care.’

The following beds will open by December this year:

- A new 32-bed short-term Convalescent Sub-Acute Care Unit at the RGH, providing focused transition and rehabilitation care to help patients return to the community. This unit is slated to open in late September. The RGH has also added 10 beds that focus on providing care to patients with dementia.
- A new 32-bed Transition Unit at the PLC, to provide care for patients waiting for a community-based bed to become available, will open in mid-September.
- A new 20-bed Hospice at the PLC, providing care that meets end-of-life needs for clients and families for whom care at home is no longer possible, and who do not need the resources of a regular acute care unit, will open in November.
- A new 38-bed Transition Unit, similar to the unit at the PLC, opens at the Foothills Medical Centre in November. The opening of this unit will coincide with completion of the new McCaig Tower in November.

These 132 new beds will greatly reduce the need for patients to be treated in hallways and other locations that were not originally designed to house and treat patients, 70 of these spaces are being closed. Approximately 60 safety-compliant, over-complement beds will continue to be maintained across the three hospitals to help address surge capacity needs.

The recent opening of Garrison Green, a new 200-bed continuing care living facility in southwest Calgary, is a cornerstone of the overall plan to increase capacity in Calgary. Many of the residents moving into this new facility have been waiting in hospital for a more appropriate setting.

This new capacity in the community and in these hospitals will ease pressure on emergency departments by making it possible to admit more patients into hospital beds more quickly.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than 3.7 million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

- 30 -

For media inquiries, contact:
James Finstad
AHS Communications
403-650-7446