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## NEWS RELEASE

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### For Immediate Release

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## Construction starts on new residential care beds and assisted living units for Prince George

Seniors in Prince George will benefit from new residential care beds and housing units in a \$42-million seniors housing facility. With funding from the Government of British Columbia, Northern Health is moving ahead with construction of the facility at 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Victoria Street.

“By working together with Northern Health, we’re making progress on government’s commitment to provide 5,000 net-new beds by 2008 and we’re also giving seniors more opportunities to stay engaged in and supported by their communities as they age,” said Prince George North MLA Pat Bell.

Northern Health has awarded the construction contract for the new facility to Western Industrial Contracting Ltd. of Prince George. Once finished in 2009, the building will provide 93 new residential care beds for seniors who need around-the-clock nursing care. The facility will also feature 80 additional seniors housing units, 50 of which will provide assisted living services for seniors who can be mostly independent with specialized housing, meals and health supports.

“With today’s seniors living longer, healthier and more active lives, it makes sense to provide a place where they can live independently, and yet still have some support close by, should they need it,” said Prince George-Mount Robson MLA Shirley Bond.

The 93 new residential care beds will meet up-to-date standards for the highest level of care. Seniors who need around-the-clock nursing care in a home-like environment will benefit from these beds. The facility will include full wheelchair accessibility, appropriate space for clients and caregivers, and the ability to include patient lifts and support devices.

“Our seniors built this community, and we want to ensure they have access to health and housing options, such as this one in Prince George, which will offer a range of services and levels of support,” said Prince George-Omineca MLA John Rustad.

The assisted living service on the site will provide 50 units under Independent Living BC, a housing-for-health program where tenants pay 70 per cent of their after-tax income for their units. Residents will receive two meals a day, weekly housekeeping and linen services, 24-hour emergency response, personal care services and recreational and social opportunities. Assisted living apartments add to the current range of housing and care options available to seniors by providing a middle option between home support and residential care.

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"This project will greatly expand our seniors care capacity in the city, providing our growing seniors population with a modern facility that will meet their health care needs," said Dr. Charles Jago, chair of the Northern Health Board.

Site preparation is underway at the property. Completion of the project is scheduled for 2009.

To date, health providers have built 8,839 new and replacement beds and units across British Columbia. This includes 3,411 net-new beds and units as part of the government's commitment to build 5,000 net new beds and units by the end of 2008.

British Columbia's health system will benefit from more investments like this over the next three years as part of the Province's \$2.7 billion health sector capital plan.

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