

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2007HEALTH0041-000421
April 12, 2007

Ministry of Health
BC Ambulance Service

B.C. AIR AMBULANCE AIRPLANES TAKE OFF

RICHMOND – Six airplanes under new contracts with the BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) Air Ambulance Program are beginning service to transport patients throughout British Columbia, announced Health Minister George Abbott.

“These world-class air ambulances are an excellent example of the Province’s commitment to providing state-of-the-art health-care equipment to patients across B.C.,” said Abbott, speaking at a news conference to launch the new contracts at Vancouver International Airport. “As well, the addition of an airplane dedicated to routine patient transfers between health care facilities will support health authorities and ensure quality, timely service by freeing up the remaining five airplanes for essential emergency transport.”

The BCAS Air Ambulance Program operates six airplanes, two in Kelowna, one in Prince George and three in Vancouver, and three helicopters, one in Prince Rupert and two in Vancouver. In addition, BCAS also uses approximately 40 charter carriers throughout British Columbia for patient transfers on an as-needed basis.

“These airplanes will ensure safe, reliable and efficient service for patients in all areas of the province,” said Fred Platteel, chief executive officer of the BC Ambulance Service. “Patient care needs, aviation technologies and training are constantly evolving, and these aircraft will ensure that the Air Ambulance Program is keeping pace and we are continuing to provide the best service possible.”

The airplanes, five turboprop and one jet aircraft, feature enhanced electronic safety equipment that exceeds Transport Canada’s certification requirements and are upgraded and modernized in comparison to the fleet in use previously.

The estimated cost of the new airplane contracts are \$17.3 million in 2007/08. The budget for the BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) Air Ambulance Program has risen to an estimated \$38 million in 2006/07, a 90 per cent increase compared to the 2000/01 budget of \$20 million.

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1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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