

NEWS RELEASE

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Progress Continues on Queen Charlotte/Haida Gwaii Hospital Project

Safe soil removal will begin again this week on the Queen Charlotte/Haida Gwaii Hospital project site after approved by the Ministry of Environment. Precautionary testing of the soil on-site has determined that it carries the same amount of naturally occurring arsenic as other soil in the region.

Naturally occurring arsenic is a common component of soil. The level of naturally occurring arsenic in the soil varies depending on the area it is tested in. On the northwest coast of B.C., including Haida Gwaii, the naturally occurring level of arsenic is 15 micrograms per kilogram, and a safe range is up to 50 micrograms per kilogram.

“The public should feel confident that this soil sampling shows it is standard across the island and in the northwest,” said Dr. Charl Badenhorst, Northern Health Medical Health Officer. “There are areas in Canada that have varying levels of naturally occurring arsenic. Overall, naturally occurring arsenic poses a low risk to public health.”

After preliminary soil testing in the fall of 2013, it was determined soil should not be removed from the site until it could be verified the soil samples were consistent with samples across the islands. On January 20, 2014 the Ministry of Environment approved the soil to be removed from the site.

“It has been a long process but we are assured now of the health of the community. I am eager to see us move to the next phase of hospital construction,” said Carol Kulesha, Village of Queen Charlotte mayor.

The project timeline is not expected to be altered as crews were still able to complete work on-site including creating entrance roads, finalizing the drawings for the facilities, and relocating services.

The new \$50 million facility is funded by the Province of B.C. and North West Regional Hospital District. It is set to open in the Fall of 2015.

Media Contact(s):
NH media line - 250-961-7724