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## NEWS RELEASE

**For immediate release  
February 1, 2016**

BC Cancer Agency  
Provincial Health Services Authority  
Ministry of Health

### **BC Cancer Agency launches two digital mammography vehicles to serve women in rural and remote areas**

**VANCOUVER** – Today, two new BC Cancer Agency digital mammography vehicles were launched and blessed during a ceremony at the Musqueam First Nation in Vancouver.

These large, comfortable coaches feature the latest technology and provide access to breast cancer screening for BC women in remote and rural communities.

Currently the BC Cancer Agency's Mobile Mammography program visits 120 remote and rural communities annually, including more than 40 Indigenous communities. The ceremonial blessing, performed by a Musqueam Elder, honours these communities to increase acceptance of the coaches and remove barriers to breast cancer screening.

The blessing was witnessed by leaders from the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, the Métis Nation BC, Chief Wayne Sparrow of the Musqueam First Nation, Dr. Moira Stilwell, MLA Vancouver-Langara and Dr. Malcolm Moore, BC Cancer Agency president.

After the blessing, the new digital mammography vehicles will begin providing mammograms for women on site at the Musqueam First Nation. The coaches will then visit communities across the province from Maple Ridge to Merritt, and Osoyoos to the Soda Creek First Nation. These new vehicles join a third coach, which was launched in February 2015. That coach is currently serving communities on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands.

The BC Cancer Agency mobile mammography service is the first of its kind in Canada to use wireless cellular data to send the images through a secure VPN tunnel from the mobile unit to the reading centre, ensuring greater efficiency of the service.

The purchase of the two new mobile mammography vehicles was made possible by Ministry of Health capital funding and sponsorship funding support by the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation and Shoppers Drug Mart at a total cost of \$1,808,000.

Screening mammograms are available for women 40 years of age and older. Women are encouraged to discuss the benefits and limitations of mammography with their doctor. If they choose to have a mammogram, it will be available every two years and a doctor's referral is not needed.

Eligible women can use the clinic locator at [www.screeningbc.ca/breast](http://www.screeningbc.ca/breast) to either find a year-round fixed location near them, or view the schedule for the mobile mammography service in their area. For remote communities that the mobile coaches are unable to access, assisted travel support is provided for eligible women in the community to attend either the nearest fixed centre or mobile stop.

**Quick facts:**

- Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer diagnosed in Canadian women.
- In 2015, an estimated 3,400 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in British Columbia, and approximately 610 will die from the disease.
- Mammograms help find cancer in its earliest stages when there are more treatment options and a better chance for successful treatment. B.C. has some of the best survival outcomes for those women who do get breast cancer.
- Research has shown a 25 per cent reduction in deaths from breast cancer among women who are screened through the Screening Mammography program.
- Only half of eligible B.C. women are taking advantage of this important free service regularly.
- The BC Cancer Agency's Screening Mammography program, established in 1988, was the first organized population-based screening program in Canada for the early detection of breast cancer.
- The provincial program has 37 fixed screening mammography centres throughout the province, and three mobile screening units that serve more than 120 rural and remote communities in British Columbia.
- The mobile units perform about 10 per cent of the total number of screening mammograms in British Columbia. Overall participation in the screening program by Indigenous women over the past three years has increased by nine per cent, and is currently at 57 per cent.
- In 2014, 259,341 screening mammograms were performed in B.C., and 1,404 breast cancers reported (5.4 per 1,000 exams).

**Quotes:**

**Dr. Moira Stilwell, MLA Vancouver-Langara**

"Breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed type of cancer for women in British Columbia. Screening helps to catch breast cancer in its early stages when there are more treatment options. These mobile mammography coaches will ensure that breast cancer screening is accessible for all British Columbian women, including those in remote and rural parts of BC."

**Dr. Malcolm Moore, president, BC Cancer Agency**

"The BC Cancer Agency has always been a leader in breast cancer screening, and with the launch of these two new vehicles I'm hopeful that we can continue to improve our breast cancer screening rates. BC has always led the way in breast cancer screening, first by launching the screening mammography program in 1988, and again today with these new digital mammography vehicles. We're the first in Canada to use wireless technology to ensure faster, more efficient results."

**Johnna Sparrow-Crawford, breast cancer survivor**

“As a breast cancer survivor, I know first hand that mammograms save lives. My cancer was found two years ago when the mobile mammography service was visiting my community. I was already two years overdue for my routine mammogram – I kept putting it off because, like many women, I was too busy. I’m so grateful that this service came to my community and I made the time to get screened. My cancer was found early and we were able to treat it and move on. I’m so excited about these new vehicles. These new coaches will make getting a mammogram easier for women. They are comfortable and private, and because they travel to rural and remote communities, they are so accessible. If I could tell women in BC anything, it would be to take care of your health. Book a mammogram – it can save your life. It saved mine.”

**Bernice Scholten, executive director, Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, Western Canada**

“Screening saves lives. Making mammograms accessible for all eligible women in this province, no matter where they live, is of paramount importance to us at the Foundation. Our partnership with Shoppers Drug Mart and the BC Cancer Agency is making this happen. With the addition of these coaches, more women in remote regions will now be served in greater comfort and privacy and they’ll benefit from the efficiency of digital mammography. We are pleased to see our commitment to early detection and the digital conversion of the province in action.”

**Lise Kuramoto, vice-president operations, B.C. Region, Shoppers Drug Mart**

“SHOPPERS LOVE. YOU. *Putting Women's Health First* - is Shoppers Drug Mart's commitment to helping women stay focused on being their best in body, mind and spirit. One of the ways we bring this concept to life is by partnering with experts across Canada. Those partners include the BC Cancer Agency Mobile Mammography Service, in partnership with the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation. Thanks to the generosity of our customers, pharmacist-owners and their staff, funds to support this service were raised through Beauty Galas held at local Shoppers Drug Mart locations throughout B.C. We look forward to welcoming the new mobile mammography coaches to rural and remote communities throughout the province to help foster better access to life-saving cancer screening for all B.C. women.”

**Learn more:**

The BC Cancer Agency: [www.bccancer.bc.ca](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca)

Clinic locator for screenings: [www.screeningbc.ca/breast](http://www.screeningbc.ca/breast)

**The BC Cancer Agency** is part of the Provincial Health Services Authority, providing provincewide speciality health care. Together, they are transforming health care through innovation. The BC Cancer Agency provides a comprehensive cancer control program for the people of British Columbia by working with community partners to deliver a range of oncology services, including prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, research, education, supportive care, rehabilitation and palliative care. For more information, visit [www.bccancer.bc.ca](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca).

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