

June 12, 2009

**CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON \$12-MILLION WESTMAN LABORATORY  
REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

A \$12-million redevelopment and modernization of Westman Laboratory in Brandon is now underway, Health Minister Theresa Oswald announced today.

“This redevelopment will make Westman Laboratory the most modern diagnostic site serving rural and northern Manitoba, and we are very pleased that shovels are in the ground,” said Oswald. “By strategically investing in the lab today, we will be able to meet the medical testing needs in the region now and for years to come.”

The project will allow the facility to house all departments on a single floor, improving work flow and specimen processing.

The new space will include equipment such as a pneumatic tube system for sending samples from the hospital to the lab and the installation of vented tissue-storage units to ensure the biological safety of specimens and samples. Other equipment, such as prep stations, coolers and walk-in refrigerators, will be used by staff preparing diagnostic-testing materials and undertaking testing.

Extensive renovations of the existing facility, such as new areas for offices, record storage and training space, and upgrades to heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems, are also part of the redevelopment.

“The province’s commitment to Westman Laboratory’s redevelopment reinforces the value that our government places on the facility as a part of Diagnostic Services of Manitoba’s provincial network of diagnostic facilities,” said Dr. Jim Dalton, chief executive officer of Westman Laboratory and Diagnostic Services of Manitoba. “Westman Laboratory is an important reference centre for Manitoba and redevelopment will not only better equip the laboratory to manage the increasing volume of testing that is performed there, but will also improve our ability to recruit and retain staff who are critical to the laboratory’s viability.”

The province is investing \$12 million in the project, with construction being completed in a phased approach to ensure laboratory services are not disrupted. When completed, the laboratory will meet top national standards, allowing the laboratory to keep pace with trends in technology and function as a modern facility over the next two decades, the minister said.

“Shortly after assuming my current position, I walked through Westman Lab and was amazed that the staff could manage the volume of services in the current space,” said Carmel Olson, chief executive officer of the Brandon Regional Health Authority. “I made a commitment to change that and the government listened. The services provided are critical to the Brandon region operations and we are pleased to have our capital planning department lead this important project.”

“Our government has invested to renew critical health-care infrastructure in Brandon and across the Westman region,” said Drew Caldwell, MLA for Brandon East, at the official construction start today. “We still have work to do, but today Brandon has more doctors, a new hospital, new diagnostic equipment and a state-of-the-art cancer centre on the way.”

The redevelopment of the lab builds on other investments at the Brandon Regional Health Centre including:

- investing more than \$750,000 to redevelop and relocate nuclear medicine services to an area next to the diagnostic imaging department in the hospital;
- purchasing a new dual-head nuclear medicine gamma camera for approximately \$630,000;
- funding a \$58-million, state-of-the-art redevelopment of the Brandon Regional Health Centre including over 156,000 square feet of new space and the renovation of another 36,000 square feet of existing space, a new surgical service, emergency department, labour-delivery-recovery and post-partum rooms, neonatal intensive care, pharmacy and central instrument processing unit;
- installing a state-of-the-art magnetic resonance imager (MRI), bringing this diagnostic service outside Winnipeg for the first time ever; and
- investing in new echocardiography equipment to improve diagnosis of cardiac disease and improper heart function.

The Westman Laboratory provides comprehensive laboratory services to the Brandon Regional Health Centre as well as Brandon medical clinics, all rural laboratory facilities outside of Winnipeg and northern nursing stations. These services include hematology (blood testing), histopathology (tissue testing), cytopathology (cell testing), microbiology (the study of micro-organisms), chemistry, transfusion medicine (preparation of blood and blood products for transfusion), pathology, specimen procurement and management and shipping.

Construction on the new facility will be undertaken by Bird Construction.