
NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
(Minister Responsible for Housing)

PACIFIC AUTISM FAMILY CENTRE FINDS A HOME IN VANCOUVER

VANCOUVER – A location for a provincial autism centre was made official today when the Province and the City of Vancouver announced they have secured a home for the Pacific Autism Family Centre (PAFC) at Sunny Hill Health Centre in Vancouver.

“Our government made a clear commitment to creating a national hub for research and a centre for parental supports that will help children and families affected by autism,” said Premier Gordon Campbell. “The new centre will help make the latest information and research more accessible to B.C. families and improve collaboration between researchers and professionals across the province and around the world.”

The PAFC will be a knowledge centre that brings together resources for research, learning, assessment, treatment and support to help children and families living with autism spectrum disorder. The Province announced their support for the project in the 2008 throne speech and has provided support to the Pacific Autism Centre Society (PACS), the non-profit group leading the project, as they develop a plan that will respond to the needs of the autism community. The Province has pledged up to \$20 million toward capital costs, pending the completion of a business plan from the society. PACS has committed to fundraise an additional \$14 million for capital and operating costs.

“This centre will be a valued resource for families and professionals,” said Rich Coleman, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General and Minister Responsible for Housing. “We have provided project development funding and assistance on the design and development. It is exciting to help the project take this next step and move towards becoming a reality.”

Autism spectrum disorder is a complex condition that impacts normal brain development and affects a person's social relationships, communication, interests and behaviour. The Province provides more than \$165 million annually for programs and services that support almost 7,000 children and youth with autism spectrum disorder and their families – including education funding for students with special needs and assessment through the health services.

“We know the extraordinary challenges children and youth with autism and their families face each day,” said Mary Polak, Minister of Children and Family Development. “This new centre – and the services, supports and resources it promises – will respond to the needs of families, both in the Lower Mainland and via satellite offices throughout B.C.”

The new Pacific Autism Family Centre will be located at 2750 East 18th Ave., on land leased from the City of Vancouver next to the Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children.

“The city recognizes the challenges that face families who deal with Autism Spectrum Disorder on a daily basis,” said Mayor Gregor Robertson, City of Vancouver. “Partnering with the Province to locate this needed facility in Vancouver is a positive step for everyone.”

The Pacific Autism Family Centre is a community-driven project, initiated by community advocates and led by the Pacific Autism Centre Society. The society has held community consultations, formed a parental advisory group and asked the autism community to be involved in determining what services they would like to see available at the centre.

“Listening to families and making sure that their voice is heard is critical to the success of the Pacific Autism Family Centre,” said Sergio Cocchia, president of the Pacific Autism Centre Society. “The challenge of autism can be met when we all work together to share information and resources.”

For information on the Pacific Autism Family Centre, visit:
<http://www.pacificautismfamily.com>

To learn more about autism services available in B.C. visit:
<http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/autism/index.htm>

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