

Tree tops Kelowna's \$200M hospital tower

Ceremony marks first year of construction that has included largest concrete pour in Okanagan history

By J.P. SQUIRE

The Okanagan Saturday

Interior Health and its contractors "topped off" the first year of construction on the \$200-million patient care tower at Kelowna General Hospital on Friday.

"Twelve months ago, nothing but dirt," said Erwin Malzer, an IH board member who is lead director for P3 projects.

He was joined by representatives of Graham Construction and Infusion Health on the roof of the H-shaped tower. The official topping-off ceremony, the completion of the basic six-storey structure, involved the Scandinavian tradition of bringing a live tree to the roof.

"We're standing on top of 360,000 square feet of concrete and steel. And all that in one year's time. It's an amazing undertaking. We are on budget, and we're even ahead of time (schedule). This new tower will provide services that literally take us into the 21st century," said Malzer.

The tower is the largest project of its type — by far — ever undertaken by the health region, he said.

The raft slab, a two-metre-thick foundation, involved the successful delivery of 3,600 cubic metres of concrete in 22 hours about six months ago. That was the largest pour in the history of the Okanagan, said Dave Corcoran, project manager for Graham Construction.

"This is probably 50 per cent faster than you would normally expect for a structure of this size," he said. "We accomplished that with two massive cranes on-site, and we ran

double crews working 10-12 hours a day, six days a week. We want to get as much done as possible before winter."

The company also used a unique concrete forming system by using massive tables that were hung from the columns, rather than the conventional method of pouring concrete on top of plywood held up by steel poles. Those factors mean construction is about three months ahead of schedule.

"It's a big milestone for us. We're very happy and very pleased. I can't say enough about the dedicated men and women that toiled out here. Everybody has really taken ownership of this structure. For many people, this will be the largest and most important structure they work on in their entire lives and it shows. They've really put their heart and soul into this," said Corcoran.

Graham has about 150 workers on-site, but that will climb to about 200 in the next few months, with completion scheduled for August 2012.

Graham is the design-build contractor, and Infusion Health will operate the building under a public-private partnership.

The patient care tower will have a new emergency ward, ambulatory care clinics, operating rooms, a rooftop helipad and two shelled-in floors for future inpatient beds. Together with the new patient care tower at Vernon Jubilee Hospital, new medical school and parkade at KGH, the total value of the



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An official topping-off ceremony on Friday involved lowering a live tree onto the roof of the new six-storey, \$200-million patient care tower at Kelowna General Hospital. Affixing a tree to the roof — to celebrate the completion of the basic structure — is a Scandinavian tradition dating back to 700 AD.

public-private partnership is \$433 million.

"The new tower, combined with the new UBC medical building, will be bigger than Kelowna's Home Depot, Wal-Mart and Rona stores combined," said Kelowna-Mission MLA Steve Thomson.

"The emergency department will quadruple in size, allowing for 50,000 additional patient cases per year by 2020 — an increase of 30 per cent," said Westside-Kelowna MLA Ben Stewart.