For Immediate Release: January 12, 2016

Winnipeg – The Minister of Health joined the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) and STARS air ambulance today at a public forum to introduce Winnipeg’s first downtown heliport, located at Health Sciences Centre Winnipeg (HSC). The heliport, scheduled to host its first helicopter landing this spring, will be the latest in a series of capital projects to be completed at HSC, Manitoba’s largest trauma centre, and will allow patients with life-threatening health concerns to access the hospital more quickly than they are currently able to.

“Patients being transported by helicopter need to have the fastest possible access to life-saving care,” said Sharon Blady, Manitoba’s Minister of Health. “This new heliport will make a real difference for patients from across the province who need access to specialized critical care.”

HSC will be the first health facility in Manitoba to have a heliport. The 60-by-60-foot rooftop landing pad, located atop the new Diagnostic Centre of Excellence building, will meet an H1 Heliport Standard and accommodate twin-engine helicopters. The heliport will provide direct elevator access to both adult and children’s emergency rooms and operating theatres.

“The opening of this heliport will allow patients to access care more quickly at a time when it is most critical,” said Helen Clark, Chief Operating Officer of emergency response and patient transportation with the WRHA. “Taking 25 to 30 minutes off of a patient’s transport time can significantly improve health outcomes for those patients in life-threatening situations.”

“STARS flew 541 emergency responses in Manitoba last year,” said Betty-Lou Rock, vice president of Manitoba operations for Shock and Trauma Air Rescue Society (STARS). “The new urban heliport will reduce transport times for critical patients by eliminating ground ambulance transfers from the Winnipeg James Armstrong Richardson International Airport.”

Helicopters will land atop the new Diagnostic Centre of Excellence; a seven-story building under construction and connected to the new HSC Women’s Hospital, to HSC Children’s Hospital and all critical care services. When it opens later this year, the building will consolidate a variety of sophisticated diagnostic equipment into one location on the HSC campus.
“We’re very excited about all of the work being done on our campus which will support the people and communities we proudly serve,” said Dana Erickson, Chief Operating Officer of HSC Winnipeg. “The heliport will help us to provide the best possible hospital experience for patients and families.”

The Diagnostic Centre of Excellence will be one of the first buildings to be connected to HSC’s new, site-based electrical grid. Recent work with Manitoba Hydro has re-wired the entire HSC campus to be powered by six main distribution points. The new grid (located on the campus itself) contains four levels of safeguards to prevent electrical outages during any civic power outages or natural disasters.

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Background

HSC Winnipeg Construction projects:

1) The Diagnostic Centre of Excellence is a seven-story, 91,000-square-foot building located on William Avenue and will be linked to HSC Children’s Hospital, the Ann Thomas Building (which houses children’s and adult Emergency departments, operating rooms and intensive care units) and the new HSC Women’s Hospital. It will house:

   a) a new pediatric MRI and associated waiting room, nursing station and support spaces;
   b) a new CT scanner;
   c) a digital radiography suite incorporating existing equipment from the Ann Thomas Building;
   d) a new operating room angiography suite;
   e) replacement of the shared adult/pediatric cardiac catheterization laboratory;
   f) consolidation of remaining pediatric diagnostic imaging programs (ultrasound, fluoroscopy and radiology viewing) from HSC Children’s Hospital; and
   g) relocated vascular and neuroangiography suites.

2) The Heliport will be the first in Manitoba to be housed atop a health facility. The 60-by-60-foot rooftop landing pad, located atop the new Diagnostic Centre of Excellence building, and connected via overhead walkway to the new HSC Women’s Hospital, will meet an H1 aircraft classification and accommodate twin-engine helicopters. The heliport will provide direct elevator access to both adult and children’s emergency departments, operating theatres and intensive care units.

3) Construction of new HSC Women’s Hospital is scheduled to be completed in spring 2016. The state-of-the-art, 397,000 sq. ft. hospital will care for mothers, babies and their families through childbirth, as well as serve as a hub for surgical and consultation services for women of all ages. The first babies will be warmly welcomed in the spring of 2017 when the facility opens after a year-long commissioning process.

4) The new facility will boast not only a new design and individual rooms (complete with private bath) but a new model and work structure for staff working in gynecology, surgery, labour and delivery, and neonatal intensive care. A transition period is vital for staff to be able to train in and acclimatize to the new facility and to new operational procedures in order to ensure the best possible care and safety of patients accessing the new facility.
**STARS, Shock and Trauma Air Rescue Service Background**

Anticipate more than 600 STARS emergency responses in Manitoba per year, with a majority of patients being transported to HSC Winnipeg.

There were 541 emergency flights from January to December 31, 2015, with 307 patients transported to hospital, including to HSC.

Training and final preparations are underway for the new heliport which is anticipated to be operational in 2016.

The HSC heliport will:
- Reduce transport times for critical patients by up to 30 minutes by eliminating the need to land at James Richardson Airport.
- Eliminate the need to take ground ambulances out of service to transport STARS patients from the airport to HSC.
- Heliports and other landing zones are an essential part of helicopter EMS systems, with more than half of Canada’s approximately 400 heliports located at rural and urban hospitals.
- There are 63 rural and urban hospital helipads in Alberta, including 5 in Calgary and 4 in Edmonton.

Hospital heliports in Central and Western Canada:
- Ontario – 86
- Alberta – 63
- British Columbia – 32
- Saskatchewan – 2
- Manitoba – 1 (at HSC, opening date to be determined)

STARS has a Fly Friendly policy which directs STARS pilots to reduce noise signatures as much as possible when approaching and departing landing areas.

STARS pilots reduce sound levels by taking flight paths around high-density residential areas when possible, and approaching hospitals and landing zones at the highest altitude possible, as deemed safe by the pilots and Transport Canada regulatory standards.

STARS typically responds to the most critically ill and injured patients who would otherwise be transported to hospital by ground ambulance using lights and sirens.

STARS helicopters can reach up to 100 decibels when landing and taking off compared to approximately 150 decibels for ground ambulances using sirens. There will likely be one or two landings every 24 hours.

If you have any questions or concerns about noise or safety, please call the STARS Winnipeg base at 204-786-4647.
Manitoba Hydro Background

The HSC Campus Re-Servicing Project - a $13.9 million infrastructure renewal project - was a complete rebuild of the electrical utility infrastructure on the HSC campus.

Previously, electrical services to new buildings at HSC were addressed on an “as required” basis through a combination of multiple service points; overhead, underground and vault transformer service of mixed voltages, feeders and stations; and an assortment of customer-owned and utility-owned equipment.

The risk with the previous approach was the lack of safeguards in place. The different voltages couldn’t permit the shared demand for electricity during outages or emergency situations.

By designing a new, customer-owned, high-voltage electrical system from scratch, Manitoba Hydro could provide HSC with the most robust system in a Canadian healthcare facility, improve performance and increased reliability.