



THOMPSON REGIONAL HOSPITAL DISTRICT

#300 - 465 Victoria Street
Kamloops, British Columbia, V2C 2A9

Telephone (250) 377-8673
Fax (250) 372-5048

No, a PET/CT is Not an Option

Since the new Kamloops Cancer Centre was announced, doctors, healthcare workers, First Nations, Thompson Regional Hospital District (TRHD) Directors, municipalities, and local MLAs have been calling on the provincial government to allocate space for a future Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scanner — or more specifically, a **PET/CT** scanner. Yes, you read that correctly: not an actual PET/CT scanner, but just the space to house one in the future.

So, what is a PET/CT scan, you might wonder? This specialized imaging test helps diagnose certain cancers, determines how far the cancer has spread (staging), checks if cancer treatment is working, and can also detect if cancer has recurred or spread to other parts of the body. It's also used to help diagnose some non-cancerous conditions.

Currently, patients who live within TRHD communities must travel to Kelowna for radiation treatments, often driving over four hours each way to receive care. While having radiation treatment available in Kamloops will undoubtedly be a relief to local residents, there are **more** people in need of a PET/CT scan who must make the same long trek to Kelowna.

This week, BC Cancer made a lot of great announcements, including that Nanaimo, Burnaby, Surrey (2) are all getting PET/CT scanners. But that wasn't all; UBC is having its PET/CT scanner replaced with a new PET/CT that will be the fastest in Canada. Kamloops? Nothing.

Does the provincial government think PET/CT scanners are important? To quote Minister of Health Josie Osborne this week on the UBC announcement: "This new PET/CT scanner will be transformative. People with cancer today will benefit from high-quality images and a more accurate diagnosis. In the future, people who receive a cancer diagnosis could have access to innovative, precision treatments developed through research enabled by this technology."

We're not asking for anything extraordinary or superior to what other cancer centres in B.C. provide —we're simply asking for the same. In short, we're asking for **equitable healthcare** for everyone in our region.

Anyone familiar with Royal Inland Hospital (RIH) in Kamloops knows that the site is constrained and its topography is challenging. It's not feasible to simply just add a PET/CT room somewhere on the campus. In fact, the next major capital project at RIH won't be completed until at least 2038 — another 13 years of people in our region having to drive to Kelowna for a PET/CT scan. The best time to add space for PET/CT was 10 years ago, the next best time is now.

I invite Minister Osborne to come to Blue River this January and we can take the 4.5 hour drive to Kelowna for a one hour appointment and then drive back.

As one cancer patient from the North Thompson Valley recently told me, "If the cancer doesn't get you, the highway will."

Mike O'Reilly, Chair

Thompson Regional Hospital District