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THE PULSE OF RICHMOND HOSPITAL

Nearly 50 years of Richmond Hospital

Imagine not having a hospital when you need it. Richmond Hospital is something we often take for granted, but more than 50 years ago, patients requiring hospital care had to travel to Vancouver or New Westminster. Richmond's doctors were also spending a lot of time driving back and forth between their practice in Richmond and hospitals in Vancouver or elsewhere. And at the time Richmond was undergoing a population boom as young families were attracted by the new houses and cheap land prices.

In 1953, a group of community leaders formed the Richmond Hospital Society in order to get Richmond a hospital. It took 13 years of hard work, small triumphs, setbacks and near-misses, but thanks to the hard work of community leaders, Richmond finally got what was then a state-of-the-art hospital in 1966.

In 1966, it was a much different community that Richmond Hospital opened to. Other than houses along the south side of Westminister Highway, the hospital was surrounded by fields and vacant lots. There were even cows grazing to the north. At six storeys, the hospital was by far the tallest building in Richmond—otherwise, there were no high rises. The first big apartments on Minoru were still five years away. Minoru Park had an outdoor pool, the pavilion (recently demolished) and an arena that sometimes hosted rock concerts featuring the likes of Jefferson Airplane.

Richmond Square, Richmond's first big mall, had just opened. It's where the south end of Richmond Centre is now. The north end of the mall wasn't there. Neither was The Bay. Lansdowne was a race track. Aberdeen was a house in a thicket.

Richmond had a Chinese restaurant, the Bamboo Grove on No. 3 Road. It served chop suey. It's still there, but now features deluxe signature items such as pork stomach soup with ginkgo, which you can enjoy with a rare \$300 red Bordeaux.

There were no Arthur Laing or Knight Street Bridges. There was a Fraser Street Bridge, a swing bridge at the north end of No. 5 Road, but a barge crashed into it in 1966.

Vancouver International Airport was about to open a new terminal, allowing

super-jets. It served 1.9 million passengers in 1968. Today, nearly 20 million passengers come through YVR annually.



The population of Richmond was about 50,000 when Richmond Hospital opened. Nowadays, there are more than 50,000 people in the hospital's City Centre neighbourhood alone. Those fields with the cows in them now have high-rise condominiums as Richmond's central core becomes a dense urban neighbourhood. Richmond currently has an estimated 213,000 residents and is growing quickly. There will be an estimated 230,000 people in Richmond by 2021.

Richmond has grown up into a busy and vibrant city in 50 years, but Richmond Hospital's original North Tower hasn't changed much. It is not up to seismic standards and needs to be replaced. It is obsolete and antiquated for this rapidly growing urban centre. According to BC Stats, Richmond has the fastest growing seniors population in BC, projected to increase by 121 percent by 2030. This growth is putting even more pressure on the hospital because the older we get, the more we need access to health care.

For 50 years, the top-notch staff at Richmond Hospital has provided exceptional medical and surgical care to residents. You can continue to support them by donating to our current surgery campaign equipment that is under way to replace equipment that's nearing the end of its lifespan.

We are also seeking community voices to champion a new Acute Care Tower to replace the 50-year-old original tower. We need everyone including the support of residents, the advocacy of our Richmond leaders to secure the commitment from our provincial government to invest now in a new tower.