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## NEWS RELEASE

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**For Immediate Release**

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### **New audiology clinic opens at Prince Rupert Regional Hospital; children and families to benefit**

Families of children living with hearing loss in Prince Rupert, the coastal communities, and Haida Gwaii will receive better access to specialized services through a new audiology clinic in the region.

The new clinic, an expansion of Northern Health's Northwest Public Health Audiology Program, was officially opened today at Prince Rupert Regional Hospital.

Minister of Healthy Living and Sport Mary Polak, Child Health BC Director Dr. Bob Peterson, North Coast Health Improvement Society president Rick McChesney, Northern Health Regional Director of Preventive Public Health Kathy MacDonald, health professionals and guests were on hand to celebrate the opening of the new audiology clinic.

"Government is committed to ensuring young children are screened early for hearing loss," said Polak. "This clinic is a wonderful asset to Prince Rupert and the surrounding area, as it will bring diagnostic and treatment services closer to home for families."

Child Health BC provided \$585,000 through the North Coast Health Improvement Society to fund renovations for the clinic, including a new hearing booth, file room, reception area and technical laboratory. These funds were made possible thanks to support from Overwaitea Foods, who in 2007 pledged \$20 million to Child Health BC to help kids get the care they need, closer to home. Northern Health will provide ongoing operational costs each year.

"This new clinic will help to provide a greater range of integrated audiology services for children in Prince Rupert and our surrounding communities," said Prince Rupert pediatrician Dr. Jeffrey Simons. "Families will no longer have to travel as far for diagnostic screening, assessment, and treatment."

Families previously travelled to the Northwest Public Health Audiology Program clinic in Terrace for most services. Northwest regional audiologist Jess Rainey had provided outreach clinics to Prince Rupert two days each month and to the Queen Charlottes twice a year. These previous visiting clinics were not able to offer full hearing assessment services for children under five.

"The objective of Child Health BC is to improve access to specialized pediatric care throughout the

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province," said Child Health BC Director Dr. Robert Peterson. "This new audiology clinic is an excellent example of strengthening a provincial network of care among health professionals to benefit children closer to where they live."

The new clinic offers comprehensive community and hospital based audiology services to a range of clients with an emphasis on infants, children and youth. The clinic's program, located on the A Level floor of Prince Rupert Regional Hospital, will include:

- Testing and assessment for hearing loss;
- Intervention services, including fitting of amplification devices such as hearing aids;
- Support, maintenance and repair of amplification devices; and
- Increased coordination with community and school-based child development programs.

"Our society is proud to have been a part of the original fundraising process for this project that was started over four years ago," said Rick McChesney, president of the North Coast Health Improvement Society. "We, together with our community, appreciate the support of Child Health BC and Northern Health in finally making this audiology clinic a reality."

"From the beginning, community support for this project has been unwavering, and I am looking forward to providing closer-to-home service for local families," said Jess Rainey, Northwest regional audiologist.

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*Funding for the establishment of an audiology clinic at Prince Rupert Regional Hospital was provided primarily by Child Health BC, a network of health authorities and health care providers dedicated to excellence in the care of infants, children and youth in British Columbia. It is an initiative of BC Children's Hospital, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority. In January 2007, the Overwaitea Food Group became the Lead Benefactor for Child Health BC with a \$20-million pledge of support to the BC Children's Hospital Foundation ([www.bcchf.ca](http://www.bcchf.ca)). The foundation is continuing to raise funds to support Child Health BC, ensuring all BC children have access to a consistent standard of pediatric care no matter where in the province they live.*

*The North Coast Health Improvement Society was formed in 2001 with the purpose of undertaking fund raising activities in the Prince Rupert area that would 'improve the health and wellness of the citizens of the North Coast'. The work of the Society is done by nine directors and several persons from the community, all volunteers. The society undertakes a variety of fund raising activities each year to raise funds primarily for the purchase of equipment. The society is currently raising funds for the purchase of a fetal monitor for the maternity department of the PRRH. The society is also responsible for the administration of donations made to the Prince Rupert Regional Hospital.*

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