

# \$83m cancer study starts with C.B. centre

By OUR STAFF  
Fri. Nov 20 - 4:46 AM

An \$83-million, 30-year cancer study officially began in Sydney Thursday with the opening of an assessment centre in the downtown area.

The Atlantic Partnership for Tomorrow's Health is part of the Canadian Partnership for Tomorrow Project, a nationally funded study announced last year in Quebec. It hopes to figure out what role genetics, lifestyle and the environment play in developing or preventing cancer by tracking the health of 300,000 Canadians.

"The ultimate goal," according to a news release, is to reduce the "risk of cancer for future generations."

The federal government is contributing \$42 million to the project, while its provincial partners, the B.C. Cancer Agency, the Alberta Cancer Board, Cancer Care Ontario, the Quebec CARTaGENE and Cancer Care Nova Scotia in tandem with Dalhousie University, are contributing \$41 million.

The Cape Breton Assessment Centre, at 335 George St., will collect lifestyle information, biological samples like blood, urine, saliva and toe nails and take physical measurements from men and women aged 35 to 69. It's the second of four offices opened in Atlantic Canada this year.

"The information obtained from the nationwide study will provide an enormous bank of data," Dr. Louise Parker, the principal investigator, said in a news release.

"Researchers will draw on the data to help identify the causes of cancer and, in turn, develop better detection, treatment and prevention methods. It may even help us find ways of preventing some cancers altogether."

According to the project, more than 13,400 Atlantic Canadians are diagnosed with cancer annually and 6,300 die from it. Sydney's cancer rates still top the charts when compared to other parts of Nova Scotia or Canada.

"The Atlantic PATH research will help us understand why the rates are so high in this region, so that we can find ways to deal with the causes and reduce those rates," Dr. Parker said. "The children and grandchildren of our study participants will benefit from this knowledge."

Local cancer specialist Dr. Ron MacCormick said they hope to learn more about the disease.

"The Atlantic PATH has the potential to significantly expand our knowledge about cancer from how we treat it to, better yet, how we prevent it," he said.