



Getting word out on mammograms

September 23, 2008

Prince George Free Press

By Allan Wishart

Shirley Bond made one thing clear when speaking at the Pine Centre Mall on Friday.

"It is literally a matter of life and death," the Prince George-Mount Robson MLA said at the Telus Tour for the Cure exhibit on breast cancer. "Many women still believe if they are diagnosed with breast cancer, it's a death sentence."

That may be one of the reasons, she said, why only 49 per cent of women in B. C. eligible for free annual mammograms are taking advantage of the opportunity. The mammograms are available to any woman in B.C. age 40 or older. Many communities have a mammogram testing site full-time, while travelling units visit other regions.

Michelle Gaites, a representative from Telus, said one in nine women in B.C. will be affected by breast cancer, and she knows.

"I was diagnosed with cancer, not breast cancer, but another form. I ignored the early warning signs, so I ended up with a larger surgery that would have been needed."

That is where mammograms, which can detect breast cancer at an early stage, become important. However, according to Debora Munoz of the Health Sciences Association, while the group's members are out trying to raise awareness of the need for the tests, they are also using the Tour for the Cure for another reason.

"We want to raise awareness of the increasing shortage in the number of health-care professionals in B.C."

The exhibit was in Prince George, its 16th stop on a 26-city tour, from Wednesday until Sunday.

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