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Hospital Foundation welcomes outpouring of support for regional radiation therapy

The Yarmouth Hospital Foundation hopes to work closely with the grassroots movement demanding a radiation therapy centre for the Yarmouth area, says Board chair Don Cook.

The Foundation Board has been working behind the scenes for several years to explore the need for a cancer radiation treatment centre for western Nova Scotia to be based at Yarmouth Regional Hospital. A year ago it set up a special radiation therapy committee, says Cook.

Last winter, Yarmouth Town Councillor Sandy Dennis came out publicly to outline the difficulties she's faced as just one of a great many cancer patients from western Nova Scotia who need to travel to Halifax for radiation treatment. As a result, Yarmouth Town Council adopted a motion to send a letter to the health minister requesting the establishment of radiation treatment at the Yarmouth Regional Hospital. Similar motions have since been adopted by Yarmouth Municipality and Argyle councils.

The groundswell grew exponentially a few weeks ago when Yarmouth teacher Derek Lesser launched the Yarmouth Cancer Support Network group on Facebook, inviting community support for radiation therapy and providing a forum for those who have experienced the hardships of seeking such treatment in Halifax to tell their stories.

"A grassroots movement is the absolute best way to get our message out there," says Cook. "In just a few short weeks, the Yarmouth Cancer Support Network has acquired more than 7,000 members and that's a huge boost.

"But the thing we can't lose sight of is that the cancer radiation treatment centre isn't just for Yarmouth, or Yarmouth County, or even the Tri-Counties," he says.

"It would serve all of western Nova Scotia, including Queens and Annapolis, and make it easier for all of the cancer patients in this area to be able to have treatment and get home at night and be with their families."

Yarmouth MLA and Education Minister Zach Churchill has been a tremendous support, says Cook, adding that Argyle-Barrington MLA Chris d'Entremont and Clare-Digby MLA Gordon Wilson are also backing the proposal.

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