
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2020HLTH0282-001739
Sept. 15, 2020

Ministry of Health
Interior Health

Primary care network coming to East Kootenay

CRANBROOK – People living in the East Kootenays will have better access to primary health care with the creation and implementation of a primary care network in the region.

“Through our primary care strategy, we are transforming the way people get the health care they need now and for generations to come with the establishments of networks of primary care providers to bring additional resources and strengthen health care supports in regions throughout B.C.,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “As a result, our strategy is reflective and responsive to the primary health care needs of the people they serve, including in East Kootenay, where we are establishing a new primary care network.”

The East Kootenay primary care network has launched and is beginning to hire new health-care providers. Over the next four years, people in the region will benefit from approximately 60 full-time equivalent health-care providers, who will work as part of the network. The Province will provide approximately \$9.1 million in annual funding to the network by the fourth year, as net new positions are added and patients are attached.

The new health-care providers in the network will work to attach the approximately 18,220 people who do not have a consistent primary care provider in the region in the next four years, while also providing team-based care to residents within the East Kootenays. Additionally, it will address the specific needs of the population, while ensuring there is a team-based approach to providing culturally safe care. These include strengthened supports and services for:

- better access to chronic disease management;
- improved access to services for individuals with mild to moderate mental-health and substance-use services;
- better co-ordinated services for families and seniors who are frail and people with complex health issues;
- more access to comprehensive services for people living in poverty; and
- culturally safe care and appropriate care for Indigenous peoples.

For people and families, it means getting faster, better access to their primary care team or provider, even on evenings and weekends, as well as being connected to appropriate services and supports in the community.

Local Elders will also be supported to provide traditional wellness and peer support, as champions in their communities. For Aboriginal people, this will mean more co-ordinated and culturally safe primary care support.

Physicians, First Nation health centres and primary care centres in the region will all have the

opportunity to participate in the network. Protocols between Aboriginal communities are being developed to advise the Ktunaxa Nation on provision of health-care services to Aboriginal people in that region.

“I wish to offer congratulations to the provincial government, the health districts and to the social investment sector for accomplishing this outstanding partnership,” said Sophie Pierre, Elder and former Chief, Ktunaxa Nation. “When First Nations and Métis benefit from such collaboration, all people of the province benefit.”

The East Kootenay primary care network is a partnership between the Ministry of Health, Interior Health, East Kootenay Division of Family Practice, the Ktunaxa Nation and Shuswap Indian Band.

The primary care network will benefit people living in Cranbrook, Kimberley, Fernie, Sparwood, Invermere, Elkford, Golden and Creston.

Learn More:

To learn more about the Province’s primary health-care strategy, visit:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018PREM0034-001010>

To learn more about the Province’s strategy to increase the number of nurse practitioners,

visit: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018HLTH0034-000995>

To learn more about the Province’s strategy to recruit and retain more family medicine

graduates, visit: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018HLTH0052-001043>

Two backgrounders follow.

Contact:

Ministry of Health

Communications

250 952-1887 (media line)

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BACKGROUND 1

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Primary care networks in B.C.

According to BC Stats data, the communities the East Kootenay primary care network will serve have a combined population of over 84,000.

Primary care networks are part of B.C.'s primary care strategy. They bring together new and existing health-care providers, health authorities, local First Nations, divisions of family practice and community service agencies to work together in partnership, ensuring people have access to comprehensive, co-ordinated and team-based primary care services.

Primary care networks mean that patients:

- who do not have a regular primary care provider (a family doctor or nurse practitioner) will be able to get one;
- will have an ongoing relationship with their primary care provider, which is important for their life-long health;
- will get access to faster, more convenient care from their doctor or nurse practitioner and the care team;
- will be provided and connected with a range of appropriate and accessible services and supports;
- will be informed about all aspects of their care in community; and
- will know where to go to get the care they need, even on evenings and weekends.

New resources being allocated include:

- 10.3 full-time equivalent (FTE) family physicians, including 1.4 FTE to provide special populations care in Golden and Creston, 2.2 FTE to support extended hours in Cranbrook and Kimberley and 0.7 FTE to provide Aboriginal health care.
- two FTE nurse practitioners, including one FTE to provide Aboriginal health care.
- 15.6 FTE registered nurses, including two FTE to support extended hours in Cranbrook and Kimberley and one FTE to provide Aboriginal health care.
- 8.1 FTE social workers
- 14.8 FTE allied health professionals
- one FTE clinical pharmacist
- 1.6 FTE medical imaging
- 1.5 FTE lab assistant
- three FTE Aboriginal health coordinators
- Elders and community champions

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BACKGROUND 2

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What people are saying about primary care networks

Michelle Mungall, MLA for Nelson-Creston –

"Primary health-care teams will make a big difference to people living in the Kootenay Boundary and East Kootenay regions. Through team-based care, health-care providers are connected to one another, so they can work together and make sure their patients' needs are being met."

Dr. Doug Cochrane, board chair, Interior Health –

"Partnerships with Aboriginal communities and the division of family practice are foundational to our approach to building and sustaining a system of strong, culturally safe health services in the Kootenay region and across Interior Health. By working together with our partners in the East Kootenay, including the Ktunaxa, Shuswap Band and Métis Nations, we know the primary care network will reflect the unique cultural and health-care needs of the communities they serve."

Dr. Todd Loewen, physician lead, East Kootenay Division of Family Practice –

"The East Kootenay Division of Family Practice has been eagerly anticipating the implementation of the East Kootenay Primary Care Network, which will improve primary care supports and access for all of our residents. Through strong partnership with the Ktunaxa Nation and Interior Health, the East Kootenay division has helped to build a solid foundation of team-based care, exemplified by the current social-worker program that embeds social workers in family physician clinics and Ktunaxa health centres. The new funding stabilizes this program and will allow for the further evolution of team-based care throughout the region that is strategically designed in collaboration with all partners to address each community's unique needs."

Dr. Kathleen Ross, president, Doctors of BC –

"The best health-care systems in the world have strong primary care, and we hope that the primary care network initiative provides additional needed resources to doctors serving their community, especially those that strengthen longitudinal care in these pandemic times. A primary care network will collectively increase a community's capacity to provide greater access to primary care for those who need it, especially for vulnerable patients and those with complex health conditions."

Debbie Whitehead, director, Ktunaxa Nation Social Investment Sector –

"The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) addresses the

right to traditional health practices and the equal right to access the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The Ktunaxa Nation, in collaboration with other First Nations and the Métis people, have been advocating for culturally safe care for all Aboriginal people with the goal of closing disparity in health outcomes for Aboriginal people. In ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa, the parts of the Kootenay Boundary and East Kootenay health districts are located within, the Ktunaxa Nation has been one of the partners in the planning for and governance of primary care. This partnership breathes life into Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and UNDRIP. The Ktunaxa Nation commends this partnership, ensuring Aboriginal voice is an active part of primary care planning and delivery.”

Michael Sandler, executive director, Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of BC –

“The association of the Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of BC is pleased that the knowledge, skills and expertise of the entire health-care team will improve access to health care for British Columbians through the new primary care networks. We believe that this approach will be pivotal in ensuring B.C. families feel connected to their health-care team, and we are excited to see the launch of primary care networks in B.C.”

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