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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2020HLTH0286-001745  
Sept. 15, 2020

Ministry of Health

### **Primary care network coming to Kootenay Boundary**

NELSON – People living in the Kootenay Boundary region will have better access to primary health care with the creation and implementation of a primary care network in the region.

“Team-based care that responds to the needs of each community is going to be the backbone of the new primary care system in B.C. and will transform how patients’ everyday health-care needs are met today, tomorrow and beyond,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “By establishing new primary care networks, as part of our primary care strategy, we are strengthening health care supports to address long-standing gaps in everyday health care for people in B.C., including those living in the Kootenay Boundary region.”

Government will provide \$5.3 million in annual funding to the Kootenay Boundary primary care network when fully established.

Over the next three years, residents will benefit from approximately an additional 33 full-time equivalent (FTE) health-care providers who will provide better access to primary care in the communities. This will include family physicians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, allied health professionals, a clinic pharmacist, an Aboriginal health co-ordinator, one manager and one administrative support staff.

The Kootenay Boundary primary care network involved consultation with the Kootenay Boundary Aboriginal Services Collaborative. The Kootenay Boundary Aboriginal Services Collaborative has representation from the Ktunaxa Nation, the Okanagan Nation Alliance, Métis Nation, and the Circle of Indigenous Nations Society. All partners continue to be involved in the implementation of the network.

“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.”

Allan Louis, Syilx Nation health governance representative, said: “Syilx (Okanagan) Nation is pleased to support the announcement of the primary care network in the Kootenay Boundary. Improving the health of all Aboriginal people in Syilx territory is a key goal of Syilx leadership. Through these innovative collaborations, we look forward to our continued progress in implementing our partnership with Interior Health and the Divisions of Family Practice.”

The new health-care providers in the network will work to attach the approximately 15,250 people who do not have a consistent primary care provider in the region, while providing team-based care to residents of the Kootenay Boundary. 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 and chronic pain management services;
- 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;
- improved access to maternity care;
- more access to comprehensive services for people living in poverty; and
- culturally safe care for Indigenous peoples.

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

In addition to family physicians and nurse practitioners, new positions include registered nurses, allied health professionals, social workers, and Aboriginal health co-ordinators.

The Kootenay Boundary primary care network is a partnership between the Ministry of Health, Interior Health, Kootenay Boundary Division of Family Practice, the Ktunaxa Nation, and the Okanagan Nation Alliance.

The network will serve people in Trail, Castlegar, Nelson, Nakusp, Kaslo, Grand Forks, Salmo and surrounding communities.

**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.

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## BACKGROUND 1

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### **Facts about primary care networks in Kootenay Boundary**

According to BC Stats data, the communities that the Kootenay Boundary primary care network will serve have a combined population of 82,900.

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 that work together in partnership to ensure people have access to comprehensive, coordinated and team-based primary care services.

Primary care networks mean that patients:

- who don't 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, including evenings and weekends.

New resources being allocated include:

- 3 full-time equivalent (FTE) family physicians
- 5 FTE nurse practitioner
- 6.85 FTE registered nurses
- 8.8 FTE social workers
- 7.4 FTE allied health professionals
- 1 FTE clinical pharmacist
- 1.5 FTE Indigenous health co-ordinator

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## BACKGROUND 2

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### **What people are saying about primary care networks**

#### **Katrine Conroy, MLA for Kootenay West –**

“The primary care network will benefit thousands of people by making sure that they have improved access to co-ordinated, culturally safe, primary and community care. I’m proud of our government for giving this work the priority level it deserves.”

#### **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 Kootenay Boundary, including the Syilx, Sinixt, Ktunaxa, and Métis Nations, along with the Circle of Indigenous Nations Society, we know the primary care network will reflect the unique cultural and health-care needs of the communities they serve.”

#### **Dr. Shelina Musaji, physician lead, Kootenay Boundary Division of Family Practice –**

“We are already seeing the benefits of the primary care network in Kootenay Boundary. Patients are seeing the provider who can best support their needs, and our practitioners are able to work as a team, surrounding the patient and giving them the care they need to lead their healthiest life possible. It’s great for all providers, who love working as a team and can focus on supporting patients with their specific skill set, and it’s great for our patients who get the right care, at the right time, by the right provider.”

#### **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.”

#### **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.”

**Win Mott, patient representative, Kootenay Boundary primary care network steering committee –**

“As a senior living in Kootenay Boundary, having the care team who knows me best all under one roof and sharing the information I provide for them makes things much easier. It is exactly what I need. Instead of confronting a bewildering array of resources on my own to get help, the primary care network gives me one familiar and trusted source, with a team working together to give me the best possible care. I’m certain that patients in Kootenay Boundary and right across British Columbia are going to really appreciate the team approach of the primary care network.”

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