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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2020HLTH0292-001752  
Sept. 15, 2020

Ministry of Health  
Interior Health

### **Improving primary care in Central Okanagan**

KELOWNA – Government is transforming everyday health care for people living in the Central Okanagan by establishing three primary care networks, which will bring additional resources and strengthened support to the region

“We are transforming how people in B.C. access health-care services through the primary care strategy. This means that British Columbians are now getting more opportunities to get the team-based and comprehensive primary care they need, closer to home,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “The Central Okanagan Primary Care Network region will support residents in getting access to the patient-centred care they need and deserve.”

The Ministry of Health will provide approximately \$11.7 million in annual funding to the primary care network, once it is fully established.

Over the next four years, and across the three networks, residents of the Central Okanagan will benefit from the addition of approximately 79 new full-time equivalent health providers who will provide better access to primary care. This includes family physicians, registered nurses, nurse practitioners, pharmacists and allied health professionals such as social workers, mental health counsellors, a dietitian and Indigenous health co-ordinators.

The Central Okanagan Primary Care Networks will see community partners work together to ensure tens of thousands of people have access to comprehensive, co-ordinated and team-based primary care services for all of their day-to-day health-care needs.

Each network will provide a full range of accessible, everyday health services that will better support patients and providers. These three networks will service Central Kelowna, Rutland/Lake Country and West Kelowna/Peachland primary care networks.

The network was developed to better meet the specific needs of the community and to strengthen services identified as high priority. These include:

- better access to chronic disease and chronic pain 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;
- improved access to maternity care;
- more access to comprehensive services for people living in poverty; and
- culturally safe and appropriate care for Indigenous people.

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.

Over the next four years, the networks will work to attach approximately 28,580 patients to a consistent primary care provider in the region, while also providing team-based and culturally-safe care to residents.

In addition, nurse practitioners and allied health professionals will be recruited in support of Indigenous health. For Indigenous people, this will mean more co-ordinated and culturally safe and appropriate primary care support.

The primary care networks are a partnership between the Ministry of Health, Interior Health, the Central Okanagan Division of Family Practice and the Okanagan Nation Alliance.

**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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### **Facts about the Central Okanagan primary care**

According to BC Stats data, the communities that the Central Okanagan primary care networks (PCN) will serve have a combined population of 204,449. Services will be available in the districts of Kelowna, Rutland, Lake Country, West Kelowna, and Peachland.

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, even on evenings and weekends.

New resources being allocated include:

#### **Central Kelowna PCN**

- 1.0 FTE family physicians
- 0.5 FTE nurse practitioners
- 32.2FTE registered nurses
- 8.0 FTE allied health professionals
- 1.0 FTE pharmacist
- 0.5 FTE Indigenous health nurse practitioner
- 1.0 FTE Indigenous health co-ordinator

#### **Rutland/Lake Country PCN**

- 1.0 FTE family physicians
- 1.5 FTE nurse practitioners
- 4.6 FTE registered nurses
- 6.0 FTE allied health professionals
- 1.0 FTE pharmacist
- 0.5 FTE Indigenous health nurse practitioner
- 1.0 FTE Indigenous health co-ordinator

#### **West Kelowna/Peachland PCN**

- 2.0 FTE family physicians
- 2.0 FTE nurse practitioners
- 5.75 FTE registered nurses
- 5.0 FTE allied health professionals
- 0.8 FTE Indigenous health nurse practitioner
- 1.0 FTE Indigenous health co-ordinator
- 1.0 FTE pharmacist

Additionally, the Ministry of Health has approved two FTE nurse practitioners with an attachment target of 1,000 per nurse practitioners to be placed at the discretion of the Primary Care Network Steering Committee.

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## BACKGROUND 2

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

#### **Dr. Doug Cochrane, board chair, Interior Health –**

“Partnerships with Indigenous 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 Central Okanagan region and across Interior Health. By working together with our partners, including the Syilx Nation, specifically the Westbank First Nation, Métis and Urban Aboriginal communities, we know the primary care networks will reflect the unique cultural and health-care needs of the communities they serve.”

#### **Allan Louis, Syilx (Okanagan) Nation health governance representative –**

“Syilx (Okanagan) Nation is pleased to support the announcement of the Primary Care Network in the central Okanagan. 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.”

#### **Dr. Michael Koss, physician lead, Central Okanagan Division of Family Practice –**

“Our community will benefit from the team-based, longitudinal care that underpins the primary care network. Our family physicians working closely in teams with nurses and allied health professionals to provide care, will enable us to see more patients and to enhance our services based on the needs of our patients, both in person and virtually.”

#### **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 network. 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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