
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2020HLTH0006-000024
Jan. 9, 2020

Ministry of Health

New urgent and primary care centre officially opens in Kelowna

KELOWNA – People living in the Central Okanagan now have better access to team-based day-to-day public health care with the opening of the new Kelowna Urgent and Primary Care Centre (UPCC).

“The Kelowna UPCC will help connect more people in Central Okanagan communities with the health care they need, when they need it,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “Thousands of area residents who currently lack a primary-care provider will benefit from increased access to same-day appointments for urgent needs and ongoing primary care, as well being able to find a doctor or care provider for regular, ongoing primary care.”

The Kelowna UPCC is one of three centres now open in Interior Health. Fourteen UPCCs have been announced throughout B.C. under the government’s primary-care strategy. The Kelowna UPCC is a partnership between the Ministry of Health, Interior Health, the Central Okanagan Division of Family Practice and the Doctors of BC. Interior Health also collaborated with the Westbank First Nation, patient partners and the Central Okanagan Regional Hospital District to develop the UPCC.

The centre will provide urgent primary care for Central Okanagan residents by a team of health-care providers, including doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers and office staff.

The centre will serve two purposes:

- to provide care for people with non-life-threatening conditions who need to see a health-care provider within 12 to 24 hours, but don’t require an emergency department and who do not have or cannot access their family practitioner;
- to help attach patients to a regular primary-care provider.

To facilitate this, the centre will attach patients to health-care providers in the community in collaboration with the Central Okanagan Division of Family Practice. Unattached patients will be provided with ongoing wraparound care on an interim basis, while arranging for patients to be connected to other local practices for their care.

Net new clinical staffing includes 22 full-time equivalent practitioners, including physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers, respiratory therapists and physiotherapists, working together to provide team-based care for patients.

The Kelowna UPCC is located at 1141 Harvey Ave.

This is the third UPCC to open in Interior Health, following the Vernon UPCC, which opened in

October 2019, and the Kamloops UPCC that opened in June 2018. Since opening, the Vernon UPCC has had 1,274 patient visits and the Kamloops UPCC has had 20,810 patient visits.

Learn More:

B.C.'s UPCC locations can be viewed by visiting: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/bc-urgent-and-primary-care-centres.pdf>

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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What people are saying about the Kelowna UPCC

Dr. Doug Cochrane, board chair, Interior Health –

“The new urgent and primary-care centre will make a big difference in the lives of Kelowna-area residents looking for local access to health-care services. By having an expert team of health-care professionals providing same-day care and facilitating attachment to primary-care practices, people will have better support for their immediate and long-term health-care needs.”

Dr. Kathleen Ross, president, Doctors of BC –

“We look forward to the integration of the new Kelowna UPCC within primary-care networks to provide more timely access to health-care services, while supporting those important long-term relationships and continuity of care that result in better health outcomes for patients.”

Dr. Michael Koss, physician lead, Central Okanagan Divisions of Family Practice –

“The Central Okanagan Division of Family Practice is proud to be part of the opening of the new Kelowna Urgent and Primary Care Centre. This centre will strengthen primary care in our community, ensure patients have access to the health-care services they need, and enable patients to receive longitudinal care by attaching them to a primary-care provider. We want to thank the Ministry of Health, Interior Health and First Nations partners for their work in bringing this UPCC to our community.”

Sherri Kensall, acting board chair, Association of Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of BC –

“Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of BC are pleased to see that the knowledge, skills and expertise of the entire health-care team will be utilized to improve access to health care for all British Columbians through urgent and primary care centres. We believe that this approach will be pivotal in ensuring B.C. families can access health-care services, and we are excited to see the launch of another urgent and primary-care centre in B.C.”

Gail Given, chair, Central Okanagan Regional Hospital District –

“Access to timely primary care is integral for the health and well-being of our region’s residents. We are pleased to support the necessary renovations to the building, creating a bright, patient- and provider-friendly space, to accommodate this new model of care.”

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BACKGROUND 2

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Kelowna UPCC amenities

The new Kelowna UPCC includes the following:

- Improved access to care through extended weekend and evening hours.
- The Kelowna UPCC is initially open from 1 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., seven days a week, 365 days a year, including statutory holidays. These hours will be expanded in the coming months, with an eventual plan to be open 9:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. each day.
- The UPCC will be an integral part of the Central Okanagan region, population approximately 212,000, and will provide access to urgent and primary care for the whole Central Okanagan.
- Of the total Central Okanagan region, approximately 46,000, roughly 22%, are over 65 years of age or older. Of those living with illness or chronic conditions, the top identified conditions are hypertension, asthma, osteoarthritis, episodic mood and anxiety disorder (including depression) and ischemic heart disease.
- More than 33,000 patients across the Central Okanagan are considered unattached to a health-care provider.
- Approximately 27% of visits to the Kelowna General Hospital emergency department could be dealt with in alternative settings, such as an urgent and primary-care centre.
- The annual operating cost of the centre will be approximately \$4.2 million.
- There was a one-time cost for startup of \$56,000 and a \$1.974-million capital investment with 60% of the funding provided by the Province and 40% (\$789,600) by the Central Okanagan Regional Hospital District.
- The UPCC is approximately 437 square metres (4,700 square feet) and includes:
 - six exam rooms, two treatment bays, two treatment rooms, a consultation room, a waiting room and a medication room.
- Using a team-based care model, urgent and primary-care centres identify unattached patients and support them until they are connected to the most appropriate provider in the community. They also provide:
 - extended hours of care (evenings/weekends/holidays);
 - basic in-office urgent-care services (e.g., sprains and simple fractures, minor cuts requiring stitches, minor burns, rapid access to mental health and substance-use crisis intervention services);
 - assessment and treatment for minor illnesses (e.g., earaches, abdominal pain, skin rashes or infections, urinary tract infections); and
 - on-site or close access to diagnostic imaging and laboratory services (e.g., electrocardiograms, X-rays, blood tests).
- Primary care is the everyday basic health care given by a health-care provider.
- Urgent primary care is the care that people need within 12 to 24 hours, and for when the situation is not a true emergency.

- Approximately 40% of visits made to area emergency departments could be dealt with in alternative settings, including an urgent and primary care centre.
- UPCCs are part of a comprehensive strategy to transform B.C.'s health system by bringing together and co-ordinating with health-care providers, services and programs to make it easier for people to access care, receive followup and connect to other services they may need.

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