
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2019HLTH0057-000653
April 12, 2019

Ministry of Health
Interior Health
South Okanagan Similkameen Division of Family Practice

Improving access to team-based primary care in South Okanagan Similkameen

PENTICTON – Government is transforming everyday health care for people living in the South Okanagan Similkameen region by moving forward with the creation of a primary-care network (PCN).

This network will bring additional resources and allow for planning a new team-based primary-care clinic in the region.

Over the next three years, up to 22 new health-care providers will be recruited to work in the PCN. This includes six new general practitioners, five new nurse practitioners and 11 additional health-care professionals ranging from registered nurses and social workers to a pharmacist.

“We know many people in the South Okanagan Similkameen region are challenged to find consistent primary care,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “Creating a primary-care network in Summerland, Penticton and Okanagan Falls is a step forward in providing thousands of residents in the region with access to the comprehensive primary-care services they need and deserve. Over time, we will bring more communities to the network, so more people across the region can have easier and faster access to quality health care.”

With the new and existing providers, the PCN will improve access to care and strengthen support for patients and providers to attach thousands of patients in the South Okanagan Similkameen to regular primary care, starting in the communities of Summerland, Penticton and Okanagan Falls. Over time, the PCN will expand to include Oliver, Osoyoos, Keremeos, Princeton and surrounding First Nations communities.

The PCN will work toward opening a new team-based care clinic in Penticton, Summerland and Okanagan Falls, which is anticipated to open in 2020. The clinic will provide extended hours of service and help address a portion of the attachment needs in the community.

The new services will be integrated over the next three years with over 50 general practitioners located in 20 existing primary-care clinics in Penticton, Summerland and Okanagan Falls, and will expand to include additional clinics and practitioners in the surrounding communities. The network will partner new and existing health-care professionals with the health authority and community organizations as part of a networked, team-based approach to providing care.

“Previously, primary-care providers often worked in silos, shouldering the workload and administrative duties,” said Dix. “By linking primary-care providers in networks we will help to put the patient at the centre of their own care and reduce the workload and stress that providers face.”

The PCN will focus on the specific needs of the community and improve health services identified as high priority for the community, including:

- enhanced access to regular, extended and after-hours services for comprehensive primary care;
- provision of team-based care through an interdisciplinary team of allied health professionals; and
- increased access to both primary-care practices.

The PCN will operate in close partnership and collaboration with the South Okanagan Similkameen Division of Family Practice, local First Nations and Interior Health. PCNs are also being implemented in Fraser northwest communities and in Burnaby.

The provincial government is providing approximately \$4.4 million in annual funding to the South Okanagan Similkameen region by the third year, as net new positions are added and patients are attached.

Learn More:

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

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

Two backgrounders follow.

Contact:

Ministry of Health
Communications
250 952-1887 (media line)

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BACKGROUND 1

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What people are saying about primary-care networks

Doug Cochrane, board chair, Interior Health —

“By partnering with the Ministry of Health, the South Okanagan Similkameen Division of Family Practice, the Penticton Indian Band and community organizations, we are putting every patient at the centre of their care. As we move forward and expand this Primary Care Network to include the surrounding communities, we will be strengthening the patient experience through team-based care and collaboration.”

Dr. Eric Cadesky, 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 needed resources to doctors serving their community. 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.”

Sue Peck, director and nurse practitioner, council president, Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of British Columbia —

“The 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 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.”

Dr. Tim Phillips, board vice chair and physician lead, South Okanagan Similkameen Division of Family Practice —

“We’ve developed a plan that is tailored to our communities. As physicians, we want the best for our patients and are excited for everyone in our community to have access to primary care. The Primary Care Network allows us the opportunity to bring in more health-care providers, who will start working in teams, and to open a larger clinic in our area over the next three years.”

Dr. Greg Selinger, board chair, South Okanagan Similkameen Division of Family Practice —

“We look forward to developing Primary Care Network plans in partnership with the rural communities in our region over the next year. The Primary Care Network is one of the many ways we are working towards making our entire region attractive to new providers.”

Chief Chad Eneas, Penticton Indian Band –

“Recognizing the hard work and time invested in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as well as the teamwork and input provided by care professionals, this Primary Care Network will, ideally, establish measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Providing succession opportunities in our region and consistent quality of care for our people will support trust in the systems designed to look after our overall health.”

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BACKGROUND 2

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South Okanagan Similkameen primary-care network

The South Okanagan Similkameen (SOS) primary-care network (PCN) is a partnership between the Ministry of Health, Interior Health, the South Okanagan Similkameen Division of Family Practice and Penticton Indian Band, and supported by the General Practice Services Committee, a joint clinical committee of the Ministry of Health and the Doctors of BC.

Initially, the PCN will support the communities of Summerland, Penticton and Okanagan Falls. Over time, the PCN will expand to support Oliver, Osoyoos, Keremeos and Princeton and surrounding First Nations communities.

These communities have a combined population of 57,746 (in 2019), which is expected to grow to 60,040 in 2024, and to 63,593 in 2032.

The new services are integrating over the next three years with over 50 general practitioners located in 20 existing primary-care clinics in Penticton, Summerland and Okanagan Falls. The new and existing health-care practitioners will work together with existing primary-care professionals as part of a networked, team-based approach to providing care.

Once fully operational, new resources being allocated to the SOS PCN will include:

New team-based primary care clinic

- This clinic will address a portion of the attachment need in the community, provide extended hours of care, and provide interdisciplinary allied team-based services to the entire PCN.
- The following resources will be added: four new general practitioners, three new nurse practitioners and eight additional health-care professionals ranging from registered nurses to physiotherapists and social workers.

Mental health and substance use

- The PCN will provide outreach support to doctors' offices for mental health and substance use, and stabilize staffing for the existing Martin St. Outreach Centre. This community hub is a one-stop location for patients to connect with a family doctor, psychiatrist, social worker, outreach worker, nurses and/or other community supports.
- The Martin Street Outreach Centre provides team-based wraparound, specialized, integrated health services for individuals with mental-health and/or substance-use concerns. Currently, the clinic is the primary-care home to over 900 patients and also provides some additional specialized services such as Stop HIV, intensive case management and opioid-agonist therapies to help address the overdose crisis.

- The following resources will be added: one new general practitioner, one new nurse practitioner and two social workers.

Snxastwilxtn Centre

- The Snxastwilxtn Centre will increase attachment and access in the community and provide extended hours of care.
- The following resources will be added: one part-time general practitioner and one part-time nurse practitioner.

Summerland and Penticton clinics

- Two existing primary-care clinics will receive new resources to increase attachment and access in their communities.
- The following resources will be added: one new general practitioner and one new nurse practitioner.

How people can access primary-care networks:

- A government website will be established for the networks to provide information to patients, including which clinics are part of the network, services provided and hours of operation, as well as how to access services and become attached to a practice.
- Each network will actively communicate with its community as it grows its services so that people living in the community know how and where to access the health services they need.

Primary-care network attributes include:

- processes to ensure all people in a community have access to quality primary care and are attached within a PCN;
- provision of extended hours of care, including early mornings, evenings and weekends;
- provision of same-day access for urgently needed care through the PCN or an urgent and primary care centre;
- access to advice and information virtually (e.g., online, text, email) and face to face;
- provision of comprehensive primary-care services through networking of primary-care providers and teams, to include maternity, inpatient, residential, mild/moderate mental health and substance use, as well as preventative care;
- co-ordination of care with diagnostic services, hospital care, specialty care and specialized community services for all patients, and with a particular emphasis on those with mental-health and substance-use conditions, those with complex medical conditions and/or frailty and surgical services provided in community;
- clear communication within the network of providers and to the public to create awareness about appropriate use of services; and
- care that is culturally safe and appropriate.

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