Second urgent and primary care centre opens in the Interior

KELOWNA – People living in the central Okanagan will soon have better access to team-based everyday health care, with the opening of an urgent and primary care centre in Kelowna.

“The new urgent and primary care centre will help connect more people in Kelowna and the surrounding communities with the health care they need, when they need it,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “By increasing the number of publicly funded health-care professionals in the community, thousands of area residents who currently lack a primary care provider will benefit from increased access to same day appointments for urgent needs, ongoing primary care and better longitudinal care into the future.”

In consultation with the Central Okanagan Division of Family Practice, Interior Health has leased a standalone property to deliver urgent and primary care services. The clinic will operate seven days a week, including evenings, weekends and statutory holidays.

In addition to hiring registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, social workers, respiratory therapists and physiotherapists, the Kelowna Urgent Primary Care Centre will recruit the full-time equivalent of five general practitioner and two nurse practitioner positions to treat patients in Kelowna. In total, the centre will employ the equivalent of 22 full-time employees.

The annual operating cost of the centre will be approximately $4.2 million.

The centre is expected to start seeing patients in late December 2019. It will deliver urgent and primary care services, and, as importantly, it will also work to connect patients without a family doctor to a regular physician or nurse practitioner.

Using a team-based care approach, once fully operational the centre will provide an expected 63,000 additional patient visits per year for both urgent and primary care appointments to support the residents who reside in central Kelowna.

This is the 11th urgent and primary care centre to be announced under the government’s primary care strategy and the second in the Interior Health authority region. The first Interior Health urgent and primary care centre is located in Kamloops and has served 9,300 patient visits since opening on June 12, 2018.

Quick Facts:

- Primary care is the day-to-day health care given by a health-care provider.
- Urgent primary care is the care that people need within 12 to 24 hours for conditions such as sprains, urinary problems, ear infections, minor cuts or burns.
• Urgent primary care centres 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 follow-up and connect to other services they may need.
• The primary care strategy will see government fund and recruit 200 family doctors and 200 nurse practitioners, and hire 50 clinical pharmacists, to help provide all British Columbians with faster and improved access to health care.

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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What people are saying about the Kelowna Urgent Primary Care Centre

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 a team of health-care professionals all at the same location providing same-day care, including physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers and physiotherapists, 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 urgent and primary care centre in hopes it will strengthen primary care in the Kelowna area and ensure people in the community have access to the health-care services they need, while also supporting a longitudinal relationship between patients and their family doctors.”

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

“The Central Okanagan Division of Family Practice is proud to have partnered with Interior Health to create the Kelowna Urgent and Primary Care Centre. This centre will increase access to care and provide a supportive, team-based care environment in which doctors can provide patient-centred care as part of a team. The Kelowna Urgent and Primary Care Centre will vitally enhance our existing network of primary care services and improve the health of our community.”

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

“The Association of 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 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.”

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Kelowna Urgent Primary Care Centre

The new urgent and primary care centre in Kelowna is a partnership between the Ministry of Health, Interior Health, the Central Okanagan Division of Family Practice and the Doctors of BC, which will host the urgent primary care centre on behalf of the community.

- The Kelowna Urgent Primary Care Centre will be located at 1141 Harvey Ave. in Kelowna.
- Urgent primary care is the care that people need within 12 to 24 hours and for when the situation is not a true emergency.
- When operational, the centre will be open seven days a week from 9:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. (including statutory holidays).
- People can self-refer for their urgent and primary care needs. Services will be accessed through both drop-in and scheduled appointments.
- Approximately 14% of visits to the Kelowna General Hospital emergency department could be dealt with in alternative settings, such as an urgent primary care centre.
- Approximately 33,340 residents in the central Okanagan report not having a consistent primary care provider.
- 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, 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 and urinary tract infections); and
  - quick access to diagnostic imaging and laboratory services (e.g., electrocardiograms, X-rays and blood tests).

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