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Third urgent and primary care centre opens in the Interior

VERNON – People living in Vernon now have better access to team-based everyday health care, with the opening of an urgent and primary care centre.

“The new urgent and primary care centre will help connect more people in Vernon 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 people 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 Shuswap North Okanagan Division of Family Practice, Interior Health has opened the Vernon Urgent and Primary Care Centre by expanding services at the Vernon Downtown Primary Care Clinic. It will transition to a new permanent location in early 2020. The clinic will operate seven days a week, including evenings, weekends and statutory holidays.

The centre started seeing patients in October 2019. It will deliver urgent and primary care services, and equally as important, it will also work to connect patients without a family doctor to a regular physician or nurse practitioner.

The Vernon Urgent and Primary Care Centre will recruit general practitioners, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers and mental health and substance use clinicians to treat patients in Vernon.

The annual operating cost of the centre will be approximately $3.5 million.

Using a team-based care approach, the centre will provide an expected 42,000 additional patient visits per year once fully operational.

This is the thirteenth urgent and primary care centre to be announced under the government’s primary care strategy and the third in the Interior Health authority region. The first is located in Kamloops and has served more than 10,320 patient visits since opening on June 12, 2018. The Kelowna Urgent Primary Care Centre is expected to start seeing patients late December 2019.

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 and 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](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](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](https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018HLTH0052-001043)

Two backgrounders follow.

Contacts:

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What people are saying about the Vernon Urgent and Primary Care Centre

Dr. Doug Cochrane, board chair, Interior Health –

“The urgent and primary care centre planned for Vernon will have a positive impact on all those living in the community and surrounding area who are looking for local, same-day access to health-care services. It will mean a team of health professionals – physicians and nurse practitioners, nurses and social workers – working together at one location to provide same-day care and, for those who do not have a care provider, facilitate connections to primary care to better support their immediate and long-term 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 Vernon 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.”

Tracey Kirkman, executive director, Shuswap North Okanagan Division of Family Practice –

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

Jacqollyne Keath, board chair, 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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The new urgent and primary care centre in Vernon is a partnership between the Ministry of Health, Interior Health, the Shuswap North Okanagan Division of Family Practice and the Doctors of BC, which will host the urgent primary care centre on behalf of the community.

- The Vernon Urgent Primary Care Centre is located at 3306 32nd Ave. in Vernon until it transitions to a new location in spring 2020.
- 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 fully operational, the urgent and primary care 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 36% of visits to the Vernon Jubilee Hospital emergency department could be dealt with in alternative settings, such as an urgent primary care centre.
- Approximately 12,800 residents in the Vernon area 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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