

For Immediate Release | May 29, 2024

Primary Care Network clinic begins operation in Williams Lake

WILLIAMS LAKE – Interior Health (IH) and the Central Interior Rural Division of Family Practice (CIRDoFP) have partnered to open a new Primary Care Network (PCN) Hub in Williams Lake.

“People in Williams Lake will benefit from the opening of the new primary-care network hub and have increased access to primary care as well as other health-care services,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “With this opening, we are demonstrating our commitment to meeting the health-care needs of people living in Williams Lake and surrounding areas, now and in the future.”

“This Williams Lake Primary Care Hub will improve access to primary care for community members of the Cariboo. We have a diverse team of health-care professionals already in place and are working to bring in primary care providers, including physicians and nurse practitioners,” said Karen Cooper, executive director, clinical operations, Cariboo/South Cariboo with Interior Health. “This is an important expansion of services for the region.”

In this early phase, the clinic is open with limited capacity and will only accept new patients by referral from a health-care professional or hospital emergency department. This will help connect patients with the greatest needs to appropriate services offered by the team currently in place at the clinic.

The clinic will serve as the central facility for existing [Central Rural Interior Primary Care Network](#) allied health staff, including a social worker, mental health and substance use clinician, dietitian, and a respiratory therapist, occupational therapist and clinical pharmacist shared between Williams Lake and 100 Mile House. IH is in discussion with an interested physician and is recruiting for nurse practitioners to support primary care services.

Once primary care providers are in place, patients will be matched to the clinic through the Health Connect Registry (details on registering are below).

“The Williams Lake Primary Care Clinic provides a centralized hub for allied health to work along-side primary care providers and has been part of our vision for the primary care network from the beginning, four years ago,” said Jill Zirnhelt, executive director of CIRDoFP. “It is a huge win for us, especially now when it is needed more than ever, and is a testament to the hard work and commitment of all our partners involved this work.”

Virtual health care at the PCN Hub will be introduced in the weeks ahead and will be one way to improve access to primary care for people who do not have a family physician.

Interior Health would like to recognize and acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Däkelh Dené, Ktunaxa, Nlaka'pamux, Secwépemc, St'át'imc, Syilx, and Tsilhqot'in Nations where we live, learn, collaborate and work together.

Moving forward, physicians and nurse practitioners stationed out of the new PCN Hub will provide outreach and mobile services to local First Nations communities.

“Recruitment of nurse practitioners has been a challenge in our area,” said Connie Jasper, director of health, Tsilhqot’in National Government. “Part of that challenge was not having a broader team of health professionals to work with. This collaborative model addresses that challenge. I think it will help recruitment and support more care for our communities.”

People without a family care provider can register with the Health Connect Registry by calling 8-1-1 or by visiting HealthLinkeBC.ca. This list is the best way to be matched with a family doctor or nurse practitioner as one becomes available. People can also call 8-1-1 to access non-emergency health information from nurses, dietitians and pharmacists 24 hours a day, seven days per week.

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About Primary Care Networks (PCN):

Primary Care Networks (PCN) are a collaborative approach to health-care delivery that brings together various health-care professionals including doctors, nurse practitioners and allied health providers like social workers, registered nurses, occupational therapists and more, to provide comprehensive team-based care to patients. PCNs are networks of local primary care providers and community service organizations that collectively meet the primary care needs of a geographic population, aiming to improve access to care, enhance patient outcomes, and address the health-care needs of geographic populations.

Sincere thanks to the Ministry of Health, the Central Interior Rural Division of Family Practice, the First Nations Health Authority, Doctors of BC, the Tsilhqot’in National Government, the Williams Lake First Nation, the Ulkatcho First Nation and all of our other partners who have made the Williams Lake PCN possible.

Partnership:

The Central Interior Rural Division of Family Practice, Interior Health and First Nations partners from Secwépemc, Tsilhqot’in and Däkelh Dené worked collaboratively to establish the Primary Care Network in the Cariboo. Together, we are committed to delivering high-quality health-care services and improving the overall health and well-being of the community through our Primary Care Network.