
NEWS RELEASE

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May 24, 2018

Office of the Premier
Ministry of Health

B.C. government's primary health-care strategy focuses on faster, team-based care

VANCOUVER – The B.C. government is launching a new primary health-care strategy to deliver faster and improved access to health care for British Columbians in all parts of the province, Premier John Horgan has announced.

At the heart of the strategy is a new focus on team-based care that will see government fund and recruit more doctors, nurse practitioners and other health professionals, to put patients back at the centre of health-care delivery.

“By improving how we connect people to care, we can help make sure that British Columbians get the health care they need faster and closer to home,” said Premier Horgan, adding that the expansion of team-based care is a key component of the Confidence and Supply Agreement with the B.C. Green Party caucus.

“The kind of care people need, and how it’s delivered, has to change. It’s no longer as simple as a doctor-patient relationship,” said Premier Horgan. “We need to be looking forward and providing team-based care that better meets the needs of British Columbians. In every community I visit, patients, doctors, nurses and other health-care professionals all say the same thing: ‘Health care delivery must become more patient centred.’ We’re getting the job done.”

Government is putting initial priority on addressing the shortage of general practitioners in the province by:

- Providing funding for up to 200 new general practitioners to work in the new team-based care model.
- Offering opportunities for every family medicine resident to work in a renewed primary care system that allows them to focus their time and energy on practising patient-centred medicine.

Joining Premier Horgan for the announcement, Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, said the focus on team-based care builds on many best practices and solutions that exist within the health-care system, but have yet to be fully leveraged throughout the province. As part of the new strategy, government will be putting in place:

- **Primary care networks:** These networks will be the backbone to the team-based approach, allowing patients access to a full range of health-care options from maternity to end of life, streamlining referrals from one provider to another, and providing better support to family physicians, nurse practitioners, and other primary health-care providers. The networks are being rolled out in the first five communities, including Burnaby, Comox, Prince George, Richmond and South Okanagan Similkameen. The networks will be rolled out in at least 15 communities over the next 12 months, and

across 70% of B.C. communities (with populations between 50,000 and 100,000 and smaller populations in rural areas) over the next three years.

- **Urgent primary care centres:** These centres will be new to B.C., and will both provide primary care to patients who currently do not have a family doctor or nurse practitioner, and weekend and after-hours care, taking pressure off hospital emergency departments. A total of 10 centres will be established over the next 12 months.
- **Community health centres:** These health centres will bring together health and broader social services to improve access to health promotion, preventive care and ongoing services. Each of these centres will be designed and developed uniquely in line with the needs of their communities and fully integrated into local primary care networks.

“Our priority is to find new ways of working, co-ordinating services and delivering care so that British Columbians don’t have to wait so long, travel so far, and search so hard for the care they need,” said Dix. “We’re providing the opportunities and framework for health professionals, stakeholders and organizations to come together at the local level and put in place solutions that work for that community.”

Dix added that government will be implementing additional technology solutions that help bring health care even closer to home for people, particularly those in rural and remote areas of the province. This will include more use of telehealth services that bring patient and provider together online, and new digital home health monitoring technology.

The primary health-care strategy dovetails with the recently announced surgical and diagnostic strategies, which will see 9,400 more surgeries and 37,000 more MRIs completed this year, in addition to the work already underway on the renewal of hospitals in British Columbia.

The primary health-care strategy adds to the Wednesday, May 23, 2018, announcement that the Ministry of Health is providing funding to create 200 nurse practitioners’ (NP) positions in primary care settings throughout B.C., and create 30 new NP education seats. These NPs will be supported in joining primary care practices, as well as establishing nurse practitioner-led primary and community care clinics.

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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What people are saying about B.C.'s new primary health-care strategy

Dr. Trina Larsen Soles, president, Doctors of BC –

“B.C. physicians welcome the promise to hire more doctors and other health professionals to give us more of the supports we need to provide comprehensive primary care services to the people of British Columbia. Networking with other professionals will allow doctors to focus more on direct patient care, enhancing the physician-patient relationship. The bottom line is doctors went into medicine to look after patients, and the more we can work together to accomplish this, the better the results will be for all of us.”

Fiona Hutchison, president, British Columbia Nurse Practitioner Association –

“We support government’s actions to increase access to team-based primary care. We’re thrilled that nurse practitioners will start to play an increased role in helping British Columbians get the health care they need.”

Val Avery, president, Health Sciences Association –

“We know that a team approach to health care means that people get all the necessary support they need – from dietitians to physiotherapists, music therapists to psychologists, respiratory therapists to social workers – and that highly trained health science professionals like these will collaborate with doctors and nurse practitioners to provide the best care for each individual. This is a step in the right direction for the health care of all British Columbians.”

Grey Showler, president, BC Association of Community Health Centres –

“The BC Association of Community Health Centres is very pleased that the provincial government is making these important commitments to improve our primary health-care system, and address critical gaps in access to care for British Columbians. In particular, the support for community health centres recognizes the contributions to health, and cost effectiveness of community-based primary health care and social services that support the wellness of individuals and families across their life spans. We look forward to working to ensure that team-based primary care is readily available when and where British Columbians need it.”

Christina Krause, chief executive officer, BC Patient Safety & Quality Council –

“We are pleased to see that there is meaningful patient engagement, and inclusion of the patient voice, within this strategy. By working together, we can improve the quality of care provided within our primary care system, realize better health outcomes and experiences, and build a sustainable public health-care system that puts the patient at the centre of their care.”

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