

SOUTH PEACE PRIMARY CARE NETWORK SERVICE PLAN APPROVED, BRINGING NEW RESOURCES TO THE REGION

In 2018, the Ministry of Health launched a transformational team-based Primary Care Strategy to increase patient attachment and access to quality, comprehensive, culturally safe, and person-centered primary care services throughout the province. As part of this provincial initiative, the South Peace Division of Family Practice, in partnership with Northern Health Authority, the First Nations Health Authority, and local community partners, is excited to announce the approval of the South Peace Primary Care Network (PCN) Service Plan. This milestone represents a significant step forward in delivering enhanced team-based primary care across our region.

With the approval of the PCN Service Plan, the South Peace region will benefit from the addition of 21 net new healthcare resources, including physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, and allied health professionals. These new team members will play a vital role in supporting the delivery of primary care services to our communities, ensuring a more integrated and collaborative approach to patient centered team based primary care.

The development of the Primary Care Network Service Plan was informed by extensive community engagement across the South Peace region. A regional PCN Steering Committee, alongside local advisory groups in Tumbler Ridge, Chetwynd, and Dawson Creek, played an active role in shaping the plan. Their ongoing involvement will be key as we move into the next phase: operationalizing the Primary Care Network.

While human resource challenges remain a reality in our region, we are committed to working collaboratively with all our partners to strengthen recruitment and retention strategies. These efforts are crucial to ensuring the success of the PCN and the delivery of high-quality, team-based care for residents of the South Peace.

A particularly exciting development is the transformation of the Eljen clinic purchased by the City of Dawson Creek into the Primary Care Network hub for the South Peace region. "Fostering strong partnerships is essential to enhancing the healthcare system in our region. By listening to the physicians and medical staff in the community, we were able to help create a solution that meets some of the needs of our community by purchasing the medical clinic", states Mayor Darcy Dober. "I'm grateful we can contribute to the success of healthcare for our residents and the region as a whole." This healthcare hub will be central to implementing PCN strategies and advancing our shared vision of team-based care. To facilitate its operations, we are actively developing the not-for-profit Juniper Health Collaborative, which will oversee the operations of the PCN hub.

Dr Charles Helm, Co-Chair of the South Peace Division of Family Practice and a resident of Tumbler Ridge, commented: "One cannot overemphasize the importance of this development for health care in the communities of the South Peace. We are grateful to the Ministry of Health for the confidence they have shown in us by approving our PCN service plan, and to the Mayor and Council of Dawson Creek for their support and foresight in purchasing the clinic that will become our Primary Care Network hub for the region. I am truly thankful that I live in a province where local leadership is given the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to health care in this way."

Though we are still in the early stages, we look forward to further engaging with and informing our communities as we work to meet the needs of the population we serve.

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