B.C. welcomes four new doctors to the North

VICTORIA – As part of the Province’s work to make sure British Columbians have access to high-quality primary care, 14 additional internationally trained physicians will begin practising in rural and remote communities throughout the province, including four family doctors in Northern B.C.

Two doctors will practise in Dawson Creek, and one doctor each in Chetwynd and Fort St. John.

The recruitment is through the Practice Ready Assessment-BC (PRA-BC) program, a partnership between the provincial government and Doctors of BC through the Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues.

“The Practice Ready Assessment program strengthens health-care services in rural and remote communities throughout B.C.,” said Health Minister Terry Lake. “Doctors in small communities not only contribute to the health and wellness of their patients, but to the community itself.”

This is the fourth group of internationally trained family doctors to be granted licenses to practice in B.C. after going through the province’s PRA-BC program. A total of 53 family doctors are now providing care to patients in rural and underserved communities under the program.

Dr. Nidaa Alalous is one of the two new physicians to arrive in Dawson Creek. Together with her family, she moved to Canada from Iraq.

“The program lightened up my life,” she said. “Canada is the best place to live. It is safe, friendly and has better opportunities.”

Dr. Alalous completed her 12-week assessment in Valemount and was warmly welcomed into the community by the local physicians.

“The assessment was one of the greatest parts of the program. My assessors were very professional. I never once felt like a trainee. They helped me through every step and treated me like a colleague. I was able to get to know my patients and they were sad when I left,” Dr. Alalous.

Now in Dawson Creek, Dr. Alalous is excited to have her husband and two grown children visit from Edmonton where her children are attending university.

“Dawson Creek is wonderful,” she said. “And very friendly. The mayor even took us on a tour during our first visit.”

As part of the program, doctors undergo a rigorous assessment process, spending three months with a B.C. physician who evaluates their skills as they care for patients. Physicians
successfully completing the program commit to practise for a minimum of three years in a
designated rural community in need. These physicians have begun practising this month or are
in the process of establishing their practices.

“More and more people are discovering the wonderful opportunities of Dawson Creek,” said
Mike Bernier, MLA for Peace River South. “Bringing in more doctors will support the delivery of
quality health-care services for our growing community.”

“Internationally trained physicians continue to make a valuable contribution to the delivery of
health care and patient services, particularly in rural communities. The PRA-BC program helps
fill the demand for skilled physicians within B.C.’s rural health authorities and its many under-
serviced rural communities,” said Dr. Alan Ruddiman, president of Doctors of BC.

The Province is working with health-care providers, health authorities and community agencies
on a comprehensive strategy to improve access to integrated primary health-care services
throughout the province. The PRA-BC is one component of this strategy.

The strategy builds on the work of the 35 Divisions of Family Practice to implement innovative
changes that meet the needs of their specific communities, such as recruiting new doctors and
preparing for retirements, introducing team-based practices, helping general practitioners
increase their capacity to accept new patients, using telehealth, and creating stronger links
between family doctors and community support services.

The Practice Ready Assessment program is one of the key ways the B.C. government is taking
action to strengthen and grow rural communities. To further support the needs of rural
communities and grow local economies, the Province announced a Rural Economic

Learn More:

To learn more about the Practice Ready Assessment-BC program, please visit:
http://www.prabc.ca/

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