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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2020HLTH0285-001744  
Sept. 15, 2020

Ministry of Health  
Island Health

### **Transforming primary care in Saanich Peninsula, western communities**

VANCOUVER – Government is transforming everyday health care for communities in southern Vancouver Island regions by establishing two primary care networks, which will bring additional resources and strengthened support to the region.

“As part of our government’s primary care strategy, we’re making life healthier and better for everyone in B.C. Through primary care networks, we are providing team-based health care and giving people a seamless patient-centred experience that is responsive to the unique needs of each community,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “The primary care networks in the Saanich Peninsula and western communities will bring meaningful change in the communities by helping more local residents access the comprehensive care they need and deserve, closer to home.”

The Ministry of Health will provide approximately \$4.9 million in annual funding to the Saanich Peninsula primary care network once it is fully established, and approximately \$10.3 million in annual funding for the western communities once it is fully established.

To date, 25 full-time equivalent (FTE) health-care providers have been recruited and are working as part of the two primary care networks.

Over the next four years, and across the two networks, residents will benefit from a total of almost 79 FTE health-care professionals who will provide better access to primary care. This includes 29 FTE health-care professionals in the Saanich Peninsula primary care network and 50 FTE health care professionals in the western communities primary care network.

The team of health professionals includes family physicians, nurse practitioners and allied health professionals such as registered nurses, social workers and clinical pharmacists.

The Saanich Peninsula and western communities primary care networks will see community partners working together to ensure tens of thousands of people have access to comprehensive, co-ordinated and team-based primary care services for all of their day-to-day health-care needs on southern Vancouver Island.

The networks will provide a full range of accessible, everyday health services that will better support patients and providers. The networks were developed to better meet the specific needs of the community and to strengthen services identified as high priority. These include:

- increased access to primary care supports to unattached patients;
- improved access to mild to moderate mental health and substance use services;
- culturally safe primary care for Indigenous peoples; and
- better co-ordinated services for families and seniors who are frail and people with

complex health issues.

For people and families, it means getting faster, better access to their primary care team or provider, even on evenings and weekends, as well as being connected to appropriate services and supports in the community.

Over the next four years, the western communities and Saanich Peninsula networks will attach 51,000 patients, while also providing team-based and culturally safe care to local residents.

In addition, Indigenous health and wellness providers including an Indigenous wellness support coach and cultural safety facilitator will be recruited in support of Indigenous health. For Indigenous peoples, this will mean more co-ordinated and culturally safe primary care support.

The Saanich Peninsula Primary Care network is a collaboration between the Ministry of Health, the South Island Division of Family Practice, W̱SÁNEĆ First Nation communities of Tseycum, Tsawout, Tsartlip and Pauquachin, patient partners, First Nations Health Authority, Island Health and municipalities.

The Western Communities Primary Care Network is a collaboration between the Ministry of Health, South Island Division of Family Practice, local First Nations communities of T'Sou-ke, Scia'new (Beecher Bay), Pacheedaht (Port Renfrew), Songhees and Esquimalt, Island Health, patient partners and municipalities.

**Learn More:**

To learn more about the Province's primary health-care strategy, visit:

<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>

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>

Two backgrounders follow.

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### **Facts about the Saanich Peninsula, western communities primary care networks**

Primary care networks mean that patients:

- who do not have a regular primary care provider - a family doctor or nurse practitioner - will be able to get one;
- will have an ongoing relationship with their primary care provider, which is important for their life-long health;
- will get access to faster, more convenient care from their doctor or nurse practitioner and the care team;
- will be provided and connected with a range of appropriate and accessible services and supports;
- will be informed about all aspects of their care in community; and,
- will know where to go to get the care they need, even on evenings and weekends.

New resources being allocated include:

#### **Saanich Peninsula**

According to BC Stats data, the communities that the Saanich Peninsula primary care network will serve have a combined population of over 84,000. The Saanich Peninsula Primary Care Network will serve people in north Saanich, central Saanich and south Saanich.

Resources will include:

- four FTE family physicians
- one FTE family physician group contract
- three FTE nurse practitioners
- 13.8 FTE registered nurses
- six FTE allied health professionals
- one FTE clinical pharmacist
- 0.5 FTE cultural safety facilitator
- one FTE Indigenous wellness support coach

#### **Western communities**

According to BC Stats data, the Western Communities Primary Care Network will serve a combined population of 95,000. The Western Communities Primary Care Network will serve people in Esquimalt/View Royal, Colwood, Metchosin, Langford/Highlands, Sooke, Juan de Fuca Coast and in five local First Nations communities - T'Sou-ke, Scia'new (Beecher Bay), Pacheedaht (Port Renfrew), Songhees and Esquimalt.

Resources will include:

- 20.5 FTE family physicians
- 7.5 FTE nurse practitioners
- 13.8 FTE registered nurses
- seven FTE allied health providers
- one FTE clinical pharmacist
- one FTE Indigenous wellness support coach
- 0.5 FTE cultural safety facilitator

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## BACKGROUND 2

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### **What people are saying about primary care networks**

#### **Mitzi Dean, MLA for Esquimalt-Metchosin –**

“This is excellent news for our communities, as I know many people personally have expressed a need for enhanced access to health close to home. We are listening, and we are taking action to make this a reality.”

#### **Lana Popham, MLA for Saanich South –**

“Saanich South residents will welcome this change because it means they will get faster and better access to their primary care team or provider, even on evenings and weekends.”

#### **Trisha Hood, health director, Esquimalt Nation –**

“Our goal is to provide culturally safe and respectful primary care services on reserve. The Western Communities Primary Care Network is working alongside us to help to make this goal a reality.”

#### **Leah Hollins, board chair, Island Health –**

“Island Health is honoured to join our partners as we contribute towards the advancement of primary care networks in the south Island region. This transformational work reflects our collective commitment to putting people at the centre of our care. By working together, we can support better health-care journeys for families in the Westshore and the Saanich Peninsula regions and for care providers who dedicate their life’s work towards keeping communities healthy.”

#### **Dr. Vanessa Young, board chair, South Island Division of Family Practice (SIDFP) –**

“The SIDFP has worked closely with our Health Authority, Ministry of Health, Indigenous and patient partners, through a meaningful stakeholder engagement process, to ensure the Saanich Peninsula and western communities PCNs deliver on their promise of improved local health-care services in line with community needs. We are pleased to see the majority of the new resources and funding directed to longitudinal primary care: a 20-year long crisis in our south Island communities. As a key strategy in the south Island, PCNs will provide our members and their patients new and much-needed resources to ensure quality primary care is enhanced and sustained.”

#### **Brennan MacDonald, executive director for Vancouver Island, First Nations Health Authority**

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“The planning, design and provision of culturally safe care in the primary care networks by and

with First Nations is key to improving health outcomes and tackling systemic racism. The First Nations Elders, traditional practitioners and healers embedded in this network will be critical to the success of this approach to inclusive, culturally relevant team-based care.”

**Dr. Kathleen Ross, president, Doctors of BC –**

“The best health-care systems in the world have strong primary care and we hope that the primary care network initiative provides additional needed resources to doctors serving their community, especially those that strengthen longitudinal care in these pandemic times. A primary care network will collectively increase a community’s capacity to provide greater access to primary care for those who need it, especially for vulnerable patients and those with complex health conditions.”

**Michael Sandler, executive director, Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of BC –**

“The Association of the 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 the new primary care network. We believe that this approach will be pivotal in ensuring B.C. families feel connected to their health-care team and we are excited to see the launch of primary care networks in B.C.”

**Layton Engwer, patient partner, primary care network steering committee –**

“PCNs provide the foundation for patients to receive care focused on their needs. The introduction of team-based care will expand the capacity to support patients’ needs well beyond the traditional family practice clinic. You will notice a change and see the individual that can provide the best care for you, knowing that a physician or nurse practitioner is overseeing your progress. With time, trips to the emergency department (ED) will shift to the PCN as access improves, and the ED will refocus only on the most critical. Your quality of care will improve with these new PCNs and the introduction of change in primary care.”

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