
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2024PSFS0030-001072
July 9, 2024

Office of the Premier
Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills

B.C. invests in family doctors through new medical school at SFU

SURREY – More family doctors will be trained faster as the new medical school at Simon Fraser University (SFU) moves forward with funding for space and operations, as well as a proposed three-year curriculum model and a founding dean.

“We’re training a new generation of doctors with a focus on family medicine to provide the services we need in our communities,” said Premier David Eby. “This investment in the first entirely new medical school in Western Canada in 55 years will mean more family doctors graduating each year to provide care for people.”

The interim site is at the existing building space at SFU’s Surrey campus, as well as a leased space nearby. SFU will design, renovate and equip the spaces to accommodate classrooms, labs, and faculty and staff office space. The Province is supporting the medical school through \$33.7 million in capital funding for interim space, alongside \$27 million in operational funding through Budget 2024. This builds on a previous \$14 million for startup and planning.

“The new medical school is a vital part of training more family doctors and meeting the health-care needs of people in British Columbia,” said Lisa Beare, Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. “This government is focused on delivering results, and through this interim space and the operational funding to support this medical school at SFU’s Surrey campus, we’re taking action to train the doctors of tomorrow and build the primary care workforce for all of B.C.”

The medical school will focus on primary care and leverage the university’s strength in community engagement and strong partnerships with the First Nations Health Authority, Fraser Health Authority, other provincial health authorities and the practice community.

The proposed curriculum will follow a three-year, competency-based model, incorporating a minimum of 130 weeks of instruction. Collaboration, cultural safety and humility will be embedded throughout, along with First Nations and Métis knowledge systems and perspectives.

“Taking action to increase access to primary care for people in B.C. is a top priority of our government,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “By establishing a new medical school at SFU - the first in Western Canada in more than half a century - with a focus on family medicine and training the next generations of physicians, we are putting people first and building an inclusive public health-care system that people can count on.”

In May 2024, SFU’s senate and board of governors formally approved the establishment of a school of medicine. The school is working toward candidate status with the Committee on the Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools, with the goal of preliminary accreditation by fall

2025. Upon successful completion of planned accreditation stages within this timeframe, the school will have approval to recruit its first class to start in summer 2026.

“I’m thrilled to celebrate this milestone for the School of Medicine and look forward to all it will accomplish for SFU, Surrey and our province,” said Joy Johnson, president and vice-chancellor, Simon Fraser University. “Everyone deserves health care that is effective, accessible, inclusive and culturally safe. We are working hard to build a school of medicine that will educate the next generation of physicians and make a difference for British Columbians in communities across the province.”

On July 4, 2024, SFU’s board approved Dr. David J. Price as the founding dean for the medical school. An alumnus of the UBC faculty of medicine, he practised comprehensive family medicine, including obstetrics and palliative care, in Vancouver for more than a decade. A nationally recognized leader in family medicine and primary care, he has held faculty and leadership roles in the department of family medicine at McMaster University since 2000.

The medical school at SFU is a complement to the more immediate work the Province is doing to train, recruit and retain more family physicians to meet the challenges people in British Columbia are facing.

Training and retaining new physicians is part of B.C.’s Health Human Resources Strategy, which focuses on 70 key actions to recruit, train and retain health-care workers in the province, while redesigning the health-care system to foster workplace satisfaction and innovation.

Through the StrongerBC: Future Ready Action Plan, the Province is making education and training more accessible, affordable and relevant to help prepare the people of B.C. for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

Learn More:

To learn about B.C.’s Health Human Resources Strategy, visit:

<https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/health-care>

To learn about the new medical school at SFU, visit: <https://www.sfu.ca/vpacademic/sfu-medical-school.html>

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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What people are saying about the new medical school at SFU

Bruce Ralston, MLA for Surrey-Whalley –

“I welcome the first steps of B.C.’s new school of medicine here at SFU’s Surrey campus. It is important that we continue to build a system open to everyone and provide effective health care for the people of the region. This space will ensure we equip the next generation of doctors with the skills they need to serve the people of Surrey.”

Dr. David Price, founding dean, SFU school of medicine –

“Taking on the founding dean role for Simon Fraser University’s new school of medicine is both a huge honour and responsibility. I’m confident that our growing and diverse team is ready to tackle the job in creating a primary and community care focused medical school that all British Columbians will be proud of. The partnership and contributions of the First Nations Health Authority and Fraser Health among others will be critical to our success, and I look forward to developing and deepening those relationships.”

Richard Jock, CEO of the First Nations Health Authority –

“The First Nations Health Authority is committed to transforming the delivery of health care for First Nations people living in B.C. We are partnering with SFU to ensure the new medical school integrates First Nations perspectives on health and wellness, and builds the foundation for a culturally safe health-care system.”

Brenda Locke, mayor of Surrey –

“I am so pleased to see the new medical school at SFU’s Surrey campus moving forward in Surrey’s downtown core. Not only will it help address the shortage of medical professionals, but it will also bring economic benefits and enhance the quality of life for our residents. Surrey is committed to supporting this initiative and working with SFU and our provincial partners to make it a resounding success.”

Dr. Ralph Belle, vice-president, medicine, Fraser Health –

“This new interim space at SFU’s Surrey campus is more than just a physical expansion, it’s a transformative leap toward addressing the urgent need for physicians in our communities. By investing in the education of future doctors, we are ensuring that everyone has access to the high-quality, patient-centred care they deserve. This initiative is a significant milestone in our ongoing commitment to strengthening the health-care system.”

Tiffany Deng, undergraduate at SFU and prospective medical student –

“As a member of the learner advisory committee, I am thrilled to help shape a curriculum that weaves together primary care, Indigenous knowledge and community partnerships. Knowing that I now have an active role in increasing the number of family doctors in B.C. feels incredibly rewarding. I firmly believe the new school will transform B.C.’s health system, making it one that advances community-based, patient-centred care.”

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