
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

Second urgent and primary care centre opening in Nanaimo

NANAIMO – People living in and around Nanaimo will have more access to team-based primary care as a second urgent and primary care centre (UPCC) opens on Thursday, May 1, 2025.

The Central Nanaimo UPCC is at 3260 Norwell Dr.

“This new UPCC is great news for people in the vibrant and fast-growing Nanaimo region,” said Josie Osborne, Minister of Health. “Access to primary care is so important to maintaining a good quality of life, and this second UPCC will facilitate more than 86,000 patient visits each year and builds on the success of the first Nanaimo UPCC, opened in 2018. This is one more action we are taking to ensure that people get the health care they need when and where they need it.”

This second UPCC in Nanaimo is expected to connect 4,770 people to primary-care providers in the region. The Central Nanaimo UPCC will provide same-day access for people who need support for their primary health-care needs within 12 to 24 hours, but do not require an emergency department. Conditions such as sprains, cuts, high fevers and minor infections are appropriate for care at the UPCC.

“The development of this new UPCC in Nanaimo is the result of extensive collaboration between our partners, including the Snuneymuxw First Nation and the Nanaimo Division of Family Practice,” said Leah Hollins, board chair, Island Health. “Nanaimo residents will receive patient-centred, culturally safe care delivered by a compassionate and dedicated team of health-care professionals within a welcoming, trauma-informed space.”

The UPCC includes a separate entrance at the side of the building for patients who require discreet, culturally safe access to the clinic. The Thunderbird Wing of the UPCC, which has two private examination rooms, was developed in close consultation with members of the Snuneymuxw First Nation to ensure that everyone who visits the clinic feels welcomed and supported. Additional contributions from Snaw-Naw-As First Nation, Mid Island Métis Nation and Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre have helped create a culturally safe and welcoming space for all Indigenous community members.

“Expanding access to health care and connecting more people with primary health-care providers is great news for people in Nanaimo,” said George Anderson, MLA for Nanaimo-Lantzville. “This new UPCC will ensure residents benefit from high-quality, team-based care that’s built to meet the growing health-care needs in our region.”

The Nanaimo Outpatient Stabilization Service, which started out as a pilot project in May 2024, has become a permanent success. This service will now be expanding and moving to the

Central Nanaimo UPCC as of May 1, 2025. Patients who do not have a primary-care provider and who have a new or suspected cancer diagnosis or an unstable chronic disease, which meets specific referral criteria, can be referred to the program. The UPCC will attach people to a family physician or nurse practitioner via the provincial attachment system, pending ongoing recruitment efforts.

The UPCC will be open seven days a week for urgent primary-care needs from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Access to the UPCC will be through appointments booked in advance by calling 1 833 688-8722, and up to 20% of services may be offered through virtual care.

Once fully operational, the UPCC will have a clinical staffing complement of approximately 35.71 full-time equivalent (FTE) health-care workers, including 9.80 FTE of family physicians and 2.32 FTE of nurse practitioners, 14.86 FTEs of registered nurses, 6.98 FTEs comprised of social workers and mental-health and substance-use clinicians, and 1.75 FTE of community health worker. This clinical team is supported by several non-clinical roles, including a clinic manager and medical office assistants.

As of April 2025, the ministry has committed \$8.8 million in annual operating costs and a one-time amount of \$200,000 for Central Nanaimo UPCC.

Additionally, the total capital cost for the Central Nanaimo UPCC is estimated to be approximately \$8.2 million.

Quotes:

Sheila Malcolmson, MLA for Nanaimo-Gabriola Island –

“It’s clear that the investment in the new UPC centre by the government will make a real difference to Nanaimo families by building on attachments to primary-care providers and reducing the wait times for urgent care.”

Teltitelwet, registered nurse, Snuneymuxw First Nation Health Centre –

“The Thunderbird Wing of the Central Nanaimo UPCC was born from a relationship built on respect and truth. It stands as a living act of reconciliation, shaped by deep consultation with First Nation voices, offering sacred space for the most vulnerable. Here, clients do not enter under the weight of judgment, but through a door of privacy, dignity and care. No longer made to walk through the eyes of the community, they are met with quiet strength, cultural safety and the healing power of being truly seen.”

Dr. Diane Wallis, chair, Nanaimo Division of Family Practice –

“We are thrilled at the opening of this new primary-care resource for the community. This centre is a testament to the power of collaboration between the Nanaimo Division of Family Practice, Island Health and Indigenous community partners. By working together, we are ensuring that the people of Nanaimo have access to safe, comprehensive and timely urgent and primary care.”

Quick Facts:

- Including the new Central Nanaimo UPCC, there are 43 announced UPCCs in B.C., with 41

delivering services and nine operating in the Island Health region.

- The Medical Arts UPCC at 103-650 South Terminal Ave. was the first UPCC established in Nanaimo.
- The Medical Arts UPCC is open seven days a week, Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and provides same-day treatment for non-emergency injuries and illnesses when people are unable to see a family doctor or care provider at a regular clinic.
- The Medical Arts UPCC was established in September 2019 and has provided more than 150,245 patient visits to date.

Learn More:

To learn more about the Province's Primary Care Strategy,
visit: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018PREM0034-001010>

To learn about the Province's Health Human Resources Strategy,
visit: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022HLTH0059-001464>

To learn more about the urgent and primary care centres and other health-care facilities in Island Health, visit: <https://www.islandhealth.ca/our-locations/hospitals-health-centre-locations>

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