

# Walk In Clinics of BC

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## NOVEMBER CONFERENCE FOR WALK-IN CLINIC OWNERS/OPERATORS

Walk-in Clinics gather amidst clinics closures, physician shortages and increased scrutiny from the public with calls for stricter regulations to tackle the province-wide opiate epidemic.

A day-long conference on Friday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018 in Richmond will be the third annual public event for a new association that represents over 300 Walk-in Clinics across British Columbia, as well as physicians, support staff, and patients. Upwards of 200 attendees are expected to participate in the conference, which is entitled “A Very Valuable Service” – a reference to walk-in clinics made by the former Liberal Health Minister Hon. Terry Lake during a debate in the BC Legislature.

## PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE UNDERSCORES THE VALUE OF WALK-IN CLINICS

Physician shortages are becoming endemic in communities throughout BC. Reports estimate more than 300,000 British Columbians do not have a family doctor. Municipalities are competing aggressively to recruit new medical graduates but are coming up short. New residents needed to supply BC’s growing economy are finding it more and more difficult to secure a family doctor in their new communities. College of Physicians has canceled their web service listing doctors accepting new patients because there are so few doctors doing so and the information becomes outdated so quickly.

Meanwhile, walk-in clinics stand in the gap, providing open access to primary care for all patients with a BC health card, hence the ‘very valuable service’ reference by the Health Minister.

## NEGOTIATIONS FRAUGHT WITH DANGER FOR WALK-IN CLINICS

As the doctors head into negotiations for a new master agreement with the government, many physicians are increasingly skeptical that the government can address the supply problems through tweaking the fee for service system. Some physicians groups are advocating health authorities employ all family doctors directly as they do with hospitalists, in-house family doctors for large tertiary care centres. Others in the healthcare bureaucracy recommend the government close walk-in clinics to free up more physicians to provide full-service family practice to a limited set of rostered complex care patients. Recently, the Minister of Health announced funding for 200 more Nurse Practitioners and the creation of 200 salaried family practice positions. Currently, these positions are only available to full service family practice not walk-in clinics.

## WALK-IN CLINICS CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND DOCTORS

BC Walk-in clinics are caught in the crossfire. Unable to offer increases in compensation due to Government caps on daily billings, clinics cannot staff their schedules with family doctors. These clinics end up closing early, or not opening on weekends and some have even closed permanently. This past year, 7 clinics in Richmond, Surrey, Maple Ridge, Whistler, and Kelowna have closed forever. These are clinics that have been servicing their communities for decades. Over the past ten years, 52 walk-in clinics have closed in British Columbia.

## ROBUST MARKET DESPITE CLOSURES

If not for the expansion of clinics in retail spaces such as Walmart, Superstore and chain pharmacies such as Rexall drugs and Pharmasave, the overall number of clinics would have fallen. The fact that there are more clinics in BC (321) than there have ever been speaks to the robustness of this market and

the resilience of doctors and clinic owners who supply it. This represents over \$320 Million dollars in healthcare expenditures to provide front line open access primary care to British Columbians unable to find a regular family doctor.

#### PETITION FOR MORE FAMILY DOCTORS TO BE PRESENTED IN BC LEGISLATURE

During last year's conference, Walk-in Clinics of BC Association launched a petition for more family doctors to be hired in BC. A trial run of the petition in two clinics in North Vancouver garnered 1000 plus signatures over a five-month period last year. The petition is set to be presented to the BC Legislature by the new NDP MLA for North Vancouver Bowinn Ma in the Fall sitting of the Legislature.

Building on the success of this petition, Walk-in Clinics of BC Association will be inviting municipalities and local walk-in clinics to launch similar petitions in their communities where the physician shortage is especially acute.

#### THIRD ANNUAL CONFERENCE TO FOCUS ON PATIENT ACCESS and CLINIC PROFITABILITY

This April, the Association will be hosting its third annual conference. Issues that challenge walk-in clinics will be addressed with Keynote Speakers from the industry and their partners, key stakeholders in BC Healthcare and provincial and local politicians.

#### THE HONORABLE UJJAL DOSANJH TO DELIVER KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Headlining this event will be a keynote address by The Honorable Ujjal Dosanjh, a former premier of BC and federal Health Minister. He will be speaking on the important role Walk-in Clinics play in supporting a single payer system of primary healthcare in Canada.

#### LEVERAGE NEW TECH TO ELIMINATE LINE UPS & SERVICE PATIENTS MORE EFFICIENTLY

Patients, anxious they may be turned away from clinics, stand for hours outside in the early morning. Some abandon hope and suffer their illnesses silently until a crisis develops and they must be cared for at an Emergency Department. The conference will showcase new technology that will eliminate these lines and empower patients to access care in a more timely manner.

The conference gets underway on Friday, November 9th at 8:30 a.m. and lasts through 4:00 p.m. The event is being held at the Executive Plaza Hotel in Richmond. The event will be convened by Mike McLoughlin, Founding Director of Walk-in Clinics of BC Association. The master of ceremonies will be Bill Tieleman of West Star Communications.

Additional information can be found on our conference website [www.bcwalkinclinicsconference.org](http://www.bcwalkinclinicsconference.org) or contact Mike directly at [mike.mcloughlin@bcwalkinclinics.org](mailto:mike.mcloughlin@bcwalkinclinics.org) or 2503174992.