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Minister Greg Rickford and All Nations Health Partners announce agreement to transform physician services for Kenora Area

January 7, 2025, Kenora, ON – In a landmark collaboration, the All Nations Health Partners Ontario Health Team (ANHP) Rural Generalist Council Care model (RGCC) initiative, has brought together Municipal & Indigenous leaders, healthcare providers, the Ontario Medical Association (OMA), and the Ministry of Health to finalize an agreement that will create a bold new standard for rural healthcare delivery in Northwestern Ontario. With the unwavering support of Minister Greg Rickford, this transformative care model is poised to ensure access to high-quality healthcare for all community members, regardless of where they live.

The RGCC initiative is a solution-driven model addressing long-standing challenges such as physician shortages, gaps in health equity and continuity of care, and the unique needs of our communities. Central to its mission is ensuring access to both primary and emergency care for every resident in the region. This innovative approach promises to support critical institutions like the Lake of the Woods District Hospital (LWDH) Emergency Department and Primary Care clinics in both the Kenora area and in First Nations communities, bolstering recruitment, retention, and sustainability.

Minister Rickford praised the initiative, stating "This model checks all the boxes for tailor-made healthcare for our region: a system that addresses challenges like physician services, emergency room services, surrounding community-based services to relieve pressures in Kenora to name a few. It is built on partnership, compassion, access and equity. It creates a strong recruiting platform for healthcare professionals, especially doctors for our region. This initiative is a testament to the resilience and determination of Northwestern Ontario communities, and I am proud to stand with them in building a stronger future for rural healthcare."

What is the Rural Generalist Council Care model?

The Rural Generalist Council Care model (RGCC) ensures that individuals, whether in urban or remote rural areas, can access a comprehensive range of healthcare services. The RGCC model brings primary and emergency care closer to home, creating a seamless healthcare experience for patients and families across Northwestern Ontario.

A cornerstone of the RGCC initiative has been the leadership and guidance of Indigenous communities and leaders, who have played a pivotal role in shaping this

transformation. The model actively incorporates culturally safe and relevant care while addressing long-standing inequities. By working in partnership with Indigenous leaders, the RGCC not only enhances care delivery but also brings the principles of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to life in a tangible and meaningful way.

Chief Lorraine Cobiness of Niisaachewan First Nation and President of the Board of Directors for Ogimaawabiitong Kenora Chiefs Advisory, highlighted the importance of this partnership - "The RGCC model is not only a transformative step forward for our people, but a historic one. The work and planning that has been done behind the scenes in partnership with the Physicians and Chiefs will ensure access to primary care and emergency care for all community members."

Cobiness added "We have for a long time had to navigate systematic mindsets that create barriers and inequity for First Nations people and their access to adequate health care. This initiative will allow our people to not only have better access in town, it will also ensure wrap around delivery in the communities, that will work in collaboration with our traditional healers and sacred medicines. This is just the beginning on a long journey for quality and equal care, and we will continue to move forward in partnership and ensuring all voices and needs are heard."

The RGCC initiative has already seen significant momentum, with healthcare providers, Indigenous leaders, and community organizations uniting to bring a shared vision to life. The support of Minister Rickford underscores the provincial commitment to rural health equity and sustainability. The ANHP would also like to acknowledge Dr. Anthon Meyer, health system transformation expert for his exceptional guidance throughout the initiative and development of the model, as well as the Ontario Medical Association for their firm commitment to see this model come to fruition.

Dr. Jillie Retson, who Co-Chairs the ANHP Ontario Health Team Clinical Advisory Committee with Dr. Shannon Wiebe shares "This is more than a healthcare model; it's a movement. The ANHP RGCC reflects a shared commitment to equity and innovation, ensuring that every resident of Northwestern Ontario can access care that is culturally safe, timely, and effective."

The RGCC is not just a model for Northwestern Ontario but a beacon of hope and inspiration for rural communities across the country. With the collective efforts of dedicated leaders and the continued support of the Ministry of Health, the RGCC is set to redefine what is possible in rural healthcare.

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