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CRACKS IN THE SYSTEM

No magic pill to cure family doctor shortage

JANE SEYD
jseyd@nsnews.com

When North Vancouver resident Brent Hillier needs to get a prescription filled these days, his options are limited.

Like many people on the North Shore, Hillier doesn't have a family doctor.

"I've been going to walk-in clinics for the past two years," said Hillier.

Not that "walk-in clinics" are places patients can actually walk into these days either. In most cases, Hillier says he has to start phoning at 7 a.m. and hope there's an appointment available.

Sometimes he just has to wing it, searching up information online, for instance, about how to adjust dosages of medication.

Getting a referral to a specialist of any kind is another challenge.

Hillier said he and his wife have tried to find a family doctor and have put themselves on wait lists. "I assume those wait lists are fairly long," he said. "Out of

Continued on page 24



Dr. Nicole Barre and Dr. Maryam Zeineddin are family doctors at West Vancouver's Ambleside Medical Clinic. Several factors have come together to put North Shore family doctors under stress as the population ages. PAUL MCGRATH / NSN

UNSAFE FOR SWIMMING

Deep Cove beach water contaminated with E. coli

BRENT RICHTER
brichter@nsnews.com

Deep Cove may be one of the most desirable places to lounge by the beach in the summer, but for the time being, swimmers should stay out of the water.

Vancouver Coastal Health is reporting

potentially dangerous levels of E. coli in the water off Panorama Park.

Under the federal Canadian Recreational Water Quality Guidelines, people should avoid the water whenever the amount of E. coli exceeds 200 bacteria per 100 millilitres of tested water.

Samples taken from five locations in

Deep Cove on June 30 showed E. coli counts ranging from 563 to 9,208 – more than 46 times the recommended safe limit.

Getting contaminated water into one's mouth, eyes, ears, or in an open wound results in a higher risk of gastrointestinal and upper respiratory illnesses, as well as skin, eye or ear infections, according to

the health authority.

E. coli is naturally occurring in the intestinal tract of humans and animals, although there are many ways it can show up in high concentrations in beach water, according to Vancouver Coastal Health.

"Storm water runoff can include

Continued on page 18



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PUBLIC HEARING

Monday, July 11, 2022 at 6:00 pm

Zoning Amendment Bylaw No. 8935 and Heritage Designation Bylaw No. 8932 for **328 West 14th Street**

Watch the meeting online at cnv.org/LiveStreaming or in person at City Hall, 141 West 14th Street

Proposal: To rezone the subject property from a One-Unit Residential 1 (RS-1) Zone to a Comprehensive Development 756 (CD-756) Zone to permit the development of 2 detached infill units, to support the retention, rehabilitation and designation of the existing Heritage 'A' Building.

To provide written input: All persons who believe their interest in property may be affected by the proposed bylaws will be afforded an opportunity to speak at the Public Hearing and/or by written or email submission. **All submissions must include your name and address** and should be sent to the Corporate Officer at input@cnv.org, or by mail or delivered to City Hall, **no later than 12:00 noon on Monday, July 11, 2022**, to ensure their availability to Council at the Public Hearing. No further information or submissions can be considered by Council after the Public Hearing has concluded.

To speak at the Public Hearing in person OR by Webex/phone:

In person at City Hall: On the day of the Public Hearing, a sign-up sheet will be available in the lobby, outside the Council Chamber, between 5:30 and 6:00pm. Enter City Hall through the doors at the southwest corner of the building (off 13th Street) after 5:30pm.

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To view the documents: The proposed bylaws, background material and presentations can be viewed online at cnv.org/PublicHearings.

Questions? Huy Dang, Planner, hdang@cnv.org / 604-990-4216

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Patients sometimes left scrambling when their family doctor retires

Continued from page 1

all of my friends, none of them have a family doctor.” Hillier and his wife have lots of company these days.

More than 7,640 people on the North Shore don't have a family doctor

It's estimated that about 900,000 people in B.C. don't have family doctors.

As of June 1, there were 7,640 patients on a centralized wait list for a family doctor on the North Shore. But that doesn't include many others who aren't on the list. About 20 per cent of North Shore residents who responded to a recent poll by the North Shore News said they don't have a family doctor.

Each month, as more family doctors retire, the challenge gets harder.

Dr. Lisa Gaede has worked as a family doctor in North Vancouver for the past 22 years. But doctors like her are increasingly rare.

Officially there are 287 general physicians working on the North Shore, according to the North Shore Division of Family Practice. But that number includes locums (doctors who fill in for regular physicians), doctors who work in salaried positions at Lions Gate Hospital and the Urgent and Primary Care Centre, as well as those working in specialized services like sports medicine and those who work part-time.

At least six family doctors have retired in recent months, and at least four more are planning to, said Gaede.

Full-time doctors on the North Shore can have more than 1,200 patients. When they retire, there's rarely anyone to take their place.

West Vancouver-Capilano MLA Karin Kirkpatrick said her office frequently gets emails and calls from upset constituents when doctors announce they are retiring. “There's been three or four doctors that announced they were retiring in just the last couple of months,” she said.

In an aging community like the North Shore, people have more complex health issues, and get very anxious when they lose their doctor. “It's heartbreaking because people are just so scared,” said Kirkpatrick. “They don't know what to do.”

One woman Kirkpatrick spoke to was trying to get a diagnostic mammogram but needed a doctor for the referral. “And she doesn't have a doctor anymore. The whole system is just broken.”

Factors combine to create family doctor crisis

Doctors and those who study health care say several factors have combined to create the crisis.

While demographic change has seen more family

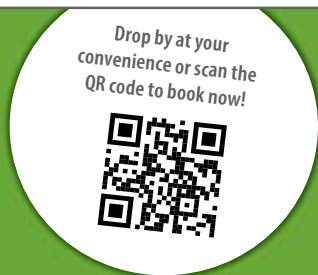
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Fewer med school graduates choosing to become family doctors

Continued from page 24

doctors retiring in recent years, the lack of family doctors isn't just a numbers game, said Lindsay Hedden, a North Shore resident and assistant professor in the faculty of health sciences at Simon Fraser University.

"We have more GPs [in B.C.] than the Canadian average," said Hedden, but fewer new graduates are choosing full-time family practice. Instead, they are opting for salaried positions in hospitals or urgent care centres, or work only part-time as family doctors, supplementing that with work at walk-in clinics or on telehealth services, she said. "Ten or 20 years ago, a lot of those

options didn't exist," she said.

At the same time, running a family practice has become harder.

As the population ages, more patients have multiple complex conditions, requiring more referrals and administration.

Traditional family practices are run as small businesses, she said. "So physicians are not only responsible for patient care, but they're also responsible for hiring staff, for keeping the lights on and for running this small business. And a lot of new grads have no interest in doing that."

Firefighters don't pay for firetrucks

"It's like if the teachers had to pay for

the schools or the firefighters had to pay for the firetrucks and the fire station," said Gaede, who has seen doctors leave family practice to work as hospitalists.

According to Vancouver Coastal Health, there are currently 17 hospitalist staff doctors working at Lions Gate.

That work is better paid, said Gaede, and doesn't require the kind of unpaid after-hours administrative work family doctors put in.

"On the days I'm not working, I'm still checking my [patients' lab results] and following up on things," she said.

"Usually I have to spend several hours each day after seeing patients just doing

my charting, getting their referrals ready, completing forms."

Doctors say the fee-for-service model they operate under is increasingly not working and hasn't kept up with costs doctors are expected to pay for with their fees, especially on the North Shore.

Doctors earn between \$31 and \$35 per patient visit, regardless of the complexity or number of the health care issues being discussed. Those haven't risen substantially in the past 20 years.

Meanwhile costs of office space have skyrocketed on the North Shore and it's been difficult in a labour shortage to find

Continued on page 26

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PUBLIC MEETING

Monday, July 11, 2022 at 6:00pm

Development Variance Permit No. PLN2022-00013
for 520 East 1st Street

Watch the meeting online at cnv.org/LiveStreaming
or in person at City Hall, 141 West 14th Street

Proposal: To vary the on-site parking requirement at the subject property from 104 parking spaces to 74. As a condition of the DVP, all residential strata units would be required to be held in single ownership and secured as rental units for a period of 20 years. These requirements would be secured through a Section 219 Restrictive Covenant to be registered on title of the property.

To provide written input: All persons who believe their interest in property may be affected by the proposed permit will be afforded an opportunity to speak at the Public Meeting and/or by written or email submission. **All submissions must include your name and address** and should be sent to the Corporate Officer at input@cnv.org, or by mail or delivered to City Hall, **no later than 12:00 noon on Monday, July 11, 2022**, to ensure their availability to Council at the Public Meeting.

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To view the documents: The proposed permit, background material and presentations can be viewed online at cnv.org/PublicMeetings.

Questions? Bram van der Heijden, Planner, bheijden@cnv.org / 604-982-3995



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Long wait times can be a barrier for patients looking for care

Continued from page 25

staff willing to commute to the North Shore.

Overhead costs are 40 per cent of GP fees

Doctors used to assume about 30 per cent of their fees would go to overhead costs, said Dr. Maryam Zeinedden, a family doctor in West Vancouver. But now those overhead costs eat up easily 40 per cent.

All those factors have combined to make many doctors reconsider family medicine. "This is not an uncommon thing on the North Shore," said Zeinedden, who says she's been on the brink of quitting herself in the past.

"I've also personally lost my own family doctor," she added. "So even the doctors can't get doctors."

One of the ways the province has tried to deal with the lack of family doctors is through opening a series of "urgent and primary care centres," including one in North

Vancouver, designed to take pressure off ERs by treating non-life-threatening but still urgent cases. Those centres also provide primary care for those without family doctors.

On the North Shore, the urgent and primary care centre on Esplanade is staffed with three doctors and three nurse practitioners Monday to Saturday, and one doctor and one nurse practitioner on Sunday.

But even at the urgent care centre, wait times are often as long as they are at the hospital's emergency department.

Physicians also worry that without the kind of "longitudinal care" patients get from a doctor who is familiar with their patients, preventative care will get pushed to the side and some serious problems could be missed.

"When you're just meeting someone for the first time, they don't have anything to compare you to, and that means it can be harder to know what is going on with their health," said Gaede. "When we know our patients over time,

we are often able to catch things at an earlier stage as we see changes over time."

North Van mom runs the gauntlet in health care search

North Shore mom Amy Rozier is one patient who recently found herself running the gauntlet of the health care system, when a spider bite on her back became infected. At first, Rozier ignored it. "Then I started getting a fever and pain down my arm," she said.

Although she has a family doctor, Rozier knew there was no chance of a same-day appointment, so she decided to try a walk-in clinic. But appointments at all five "walk-in" clinics she visited were full. Next she went to her family doctor's office, where she was told there was nobody available to see her. They directed her to the North Shore's Urgent and Primary Care Centre. But the centre was showing a seven and a half hour wait, said Rozier. "As a single working mom, I can't go and sit for seven and a half hours," she said. Next she tried telehealth, but the next available appointment was a month away.

Eventually, she went to the ER at Mt. St. Joseph's Hospital in Vancouver, because it had the shortest wait time, where a nurse practitioner cut out the infection and prescribed antibiotics.

Five days later, however, the infection still hadn't cleared. Getting the prescription renewed was a further runaround, which led her to yet another medical clinic and a diagnosis of a staph infection.

Rozier said the experience was exhausting, and "I'm one of the lucky ones who have a family doctor."

"I've got a university degree. I run my own business. What about the person who isn't technologically savvy or can't afford all this time off work to chase down things?" she said. "I'm one of the fortunate ones and if I'm struggling, how the hell are other people doing it?"

Bowinn Ma, MLA for North Vancouver-Lonsdale, understands that frustration. "When you need medical care, you expect to be able to get it," said Ma. "It's sadly not the situation right now."

Ma spent most of her own adult life without a family doctor, before finding one through the GP link run by the North Shore Division of Family Practice.

Because there are limited options for walk-in care, the urgent care centre is seeing a lot of patients without family doctors, said Ma, which has created especially long wait times.

Specialists also impacted

The lack of primary care is being felt by specialists as well.

Dr. Kevin McLeod, an internal medicine specialist at Lions Gate Hospital, said about 40 per cent of his patients on the North Shore do not have a family doctor.

"Patients still need care and often end up seeing a specialist because there isn't another option," he said. "That's more expensive and plugs up specialist care."

McLeod said he's also seen a lack of family doctors lead to delayed diagnosis of more serious conditions. "Diseased states are diagnosed at more advanced stages," he said.

Still other patients turn to non-physician health professionals like naturopaths, because those are covered by their extended medical plans and it's possible to get an appointment.

While doctors have proposed changes to the fee-for-service model to acknowledge complex patient cases, there are no simple fixes for the lack of doctors choosing family practice, said Hedden.

More community health centres, where overhead costs are borne by government or non-profit societies, staffed by teams of doctors and nurse-practitioners providing primary care, is one model she sees hope in.

Under that model, patients wouldn't have one family doctor, but would be followed by a team, she said.

"It can be difficult to set up, because it requires investment in infrastructure from somebody other than the

Continued on page 27

city
of north
vancouver

PUBLIC HEARING

Monday, July 18, 2022 at 6:00pm

Zoning Amendment Bylaw No. 8936 and Heritage Designation
Bylaw No. 8937 for 245 East 10th Street

Watch the meeting online at cnv.org/LiveStreaming
or in person at City Hall, 141 West 14th Street

Proposal: To rezone the subject property from a Two-Unit Residential 1 (RT-1) Zone to a Comprehensive Development 757 (CD-757) Zone to permit the development of a 2-unit, detached infill building (duplex) and support the retention, rehabilitation and designation of the existing Heritage 'A' Building.

To provide written input: All persons who believe their interest in property may be affected by the proposed bylaws will be afforded an opportunity to speak at the Public Hearing and/or by written or email submission. **All submissions must include your name and address** and should be sent to the Corporate Officer at input@cnv.org, or by mail or delivered to City Hall, **no later than 12:00 noon on Monday, July 18, 2022**, to ensure their availability to Council at the Public Hearing. No further information or submissions can be considered by Council after the Public Hearing has concluded.

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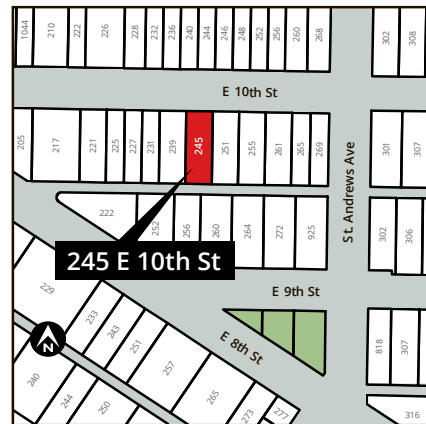
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Questions? Bram van der Heijden, Planner, bheijden@cnv.org / 604-982-3995



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Family doctor Lisa Gaede and medical office assistant Gail Zeigelmeier get ready to receive patients at the North Shore Medical Group private practice on Lonsdale Avenue. Gaede worries that she is one of a dwindling number of local doctors. MIKE WAKEFIELD / NSN

Community health centres staffed by medical teams a potential cure

Continued from page 26
physician," she said. "That's not something that's going to happen overnight."

Difficult to say no

For now, doctors on the North Shore say one of the hardest parts of their job is saying no to the constant emails, phone

calls and pleading letters they get from would-be patients.

"I find it so hard to say no," said Gaede. "It causes me a lot of moral distress."

"Right now, unfortunately, it's a privilege to have a family doctor," said Zeinedden. "But it really should be a right."

DEVELOPER INFORMATION SESSION

Jadasi Development (880 W 15th) Ltd. and Gateway Architecture are holding a Virtual Information Session where interested members of the public are invited to learn about our application for a 5 storey mixed-use rental residential building with ground floor commercial located at 880 W. 15th Street, North Vancouver.

Public input is welcome throughout the planning application process and can be shared with the Applicant and City Contact at any time. For more information, please visit: <https://www.cnv.org/Property-and-Development/Projects-and-Developments/Current-Developments/880-West-15th-Street>

How to Participate:

Please contact the applicant in advance by email info@jadasi.ca or phone (604-347-9654) to register for the Virtual Developer Information Session via Zoom. A zoom link or phone-in instructions will be provided.

Michael Cox
Gateway Architecture Inc.
604.608.1868
Mike@designvancouver.com

Date: July 20th, 2022
Time: 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM



Planning Department Contact: Matthew Menzel, 604.982.8337, mmenzel@cnv.org
This meeting is required by the City of North Vancouver as part of the development process.

Development Proposal

EARLY INPUT MEETING:

VIRTUAL Open House: July 11 to August 8, 2022
Visit: [DNV.org/public-meeting](https://www.dnv.org/public-meeting)

This is not a Public Hearing. District of North Vancouver Council will formally consider the proposal at a later date.

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