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## NEWS RELEASE

### **“Next Step Taken in Strengthening Medical Services in Meadow Lake”**

Prairie North Health Region is excited to introduce its second phase in development of Primary Health Care and improved access to health care services in Meadow Lake.

PNHR has purchased the Meadow Lake Associate Clinic building in the downtown area of the city. The space includes the area currently serving as the Clinic and adjacent vacant space. The site will be renovated to accommodate Primary Health Care services. Patients will be able to access a team of health care professionals including a full complement of physicians, nurse practitioners, and other health care providers including diabetes nurse educators and dieticians, to name a few.

PNHR along with Meadow Lake physicians believe that purchase and upgrading of the building by the Region will help achieve the shared goal of retaining and recruiting doctors, nurse practitioners, and other Primary Health Care professionals to the community.

“Physicians in particular will be able to focus more exclusively on patient care, with the Region assisting with responsibility for operation and management of the site,” explained PNHR Vice-President of Primary Health Services Glennys Uzelman.

“The expanded Primary Health Care space will enable us to retain nurse practitioners and other primary health care providers at the clinic, even after the clinic is returned to a full complement of physicians,” she added.

“This is an important step in our partnership with Meadow Lake physicians and clinic staff to stabilize, strengthen, and improve patient access to the medical services local and area residents need,” stated Uzelman.

Prairie North Health Region’s long-term vision for Primary Health Care Services in Meadow Lake is to have teams of health care professionals and community members working together to improve health care services in Meadow Lake and area. The program will work towards improving teamwork, developing strategies to help prevent illness, and to help individuals manage illness.

In the shorter term, PNHR continues to recruit physicians and nurse practitioners. The Region has achieved some success in recruiting physicians to Meadow Lake. The latest to arrive was a General Practitioner/Anaesthetist on July 27, with more due to arrive in the fall. Also, a local physician who has been on sabbatical is due to return in August. Recruiting efforts will continue until a full complement of nursing and physician staff is realized.

The Region is working to establish a partnership with the University of Saskatchewan College of Physicians and Surgeons to become a key player in the training and mentorship of student physicians through the Distributive Learning Model. The intention is to accommodate two medical residents and two medical students at the Clinic, beginning in January 2011, and strengthen the Meadow Lake Clinic in a teaching role.

PNHR is also seeking to strengthen its partnership with the College of Nursing so that Meadow Lake can become a centre for nursing student practicums, particularly nurse practitioner students.

PNHR continues efforts to recruit nurse practitioners to the three NP positions allotted for Meadow Lake under the Primary Health Care model. Two NPs will be providing locum services at the Meadow Lake Clinic during August. PNHR is also implementing a strategy to encourage and support local registered nurses in taking the additional training required to become nurse practitioners. "At least one nurse is in the Nurse Practitioner program currently, with several others expressing interest in applying," reported Uzelman.

Other PHC services are being added to the Clinic as well. A diabetes nurse educator will begin working at the clinic one day per week with plans to move to 2 days a week in the future. The potential for group appointments for certain conditions is also an option being explored.

"Our aim is to build a sustainable, satisfying practice and teaching environment focused on meeting patient needs," said Uzelman. "We are also proposing creation of a local Primary Health Care steering committee with professional and community representation to help inform and guide development of the Meadow Lake PHC site."

"The future looks positive and exciting for patients and Primary Health Care services in Meadow Lake. We extend our deepest appreciation to all Meadow Lake and area residents for your patience and understanding over the past several months as we have worked in partnership with the city's medical and health professional community to rebuild a strong core of quality health services," Uzelman concluded.

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