



## TUMBLER RIDGE HEALTH SERVICES COMMUNITY UPDATE

**October 14, 2025**

Over the past few weeks since we made temporary changes to on call after-hours coverage for Emergency Department services in Tumbler Ridge – shifting to a more direct 911 ambulance response on weeknights and weekends – Northern Health representatives have visited the community several times. We've met with local leaders, talked with residents, and supported physicians and staff at the Tumbler Ridge Health Centre.

These conversations continue to help us better understand what matters most to the community. We'd like to share what we've heard and talk about the ideas we're exploring to stabilize and improve access to emergency care, primary care and family physician access, and other services in Tumbler Ridge.

We recognize there are some misconceptions, and we want you to know 24/7 emergency care remains available in Tumbler Ridge. The ER is open during regular hours, and if you call 911 after hours, two local ambulances and advanced care paramedics from Dawson Creek are ready to respond.

We must acknowledge the difficulties of going back to the previous on-call staff model for overnights and weekends. We're facing staffing shortages and asking staff to work those hours risk leading to burnout. It's also challenging to recruit to the former overnight and weekend on call schedule, and we don't want to risk losing the recently added ambulance resources.

### **What we've heard**

Many discussions, collaborative brainstorming, and planning are happening to help improve health services in Tumbler Ridge. A big part of this work is hiring more medical staff, which is key to growing and improving services in the community.

- At the September 7 town hall, key topics in the conversation included recruitment and retention, transportation options, primary care access, and making sure leadership is listening and taking action.
- During the September 11 roundtables, we heard more about the importance of access to primary care – like being able to book appointments when needed. People also shared concerns about travel distances and weather conditions making it harder to access care and asked questions about the challenges of recruiting to rural communities.

- At the recent Union of BC Municipalities conference, we heard directly from the District of Tumbler Ridge about the community's concerns. They shared their desire to support its residents by advocating for and working together on recruitment efforts, service enhancements and keeping people informed about ongoing developments with local health care.

### What we're doing

- Planning more focus group sessions to be held in the community in November.
- We are working with local physicians and other health care providers on the Tumbler Ridge team to explore the opportunities for increased services and access when physician staffing levels improve – things like:
  - Considering weekend health centre hours for same-day appointments
  - Expanding the hours of emergency room service during the week;
  - Increasing other services like expanded IV infusions, or community seniors' outreach.

We know how important it is for people who live and work in Tumbler Ridge to have access to emergency care and primary care. We are grateful for the support and kindness you've shown to health care providers and staff in the community.

It's important to know that access to emergency care at a higher level of care facility (with diagnostic, surgical and other supports) often means being transported by BC Emergency Health Services, especially from smaller communities like Tumbler Ridge. Having ambulances respond directly and take patients to that higher level of care shortens the time to reach those services, meaning faster access to care. Tumbler Ridge is fortunate to now have two ambulances operating 24/7, along with a newly-launched 24/7 advanced paramedic team in Dawson Creek.

BC EHS paramedics are licensed medical professionals who are trained to care for patients outside of a hospital setting, both at the scene of emergencies and during ambulance transport. Primary care paramedics provide medical treatments for a wide range of traumatic injuries and chronic and acute health conditions. This can include starting IVs, administering certain drugs, performing CPR and airway management during cardiac arrest, and more. Advanced Care Paramedics specialize in advanced care of medical and trauma patients, with the ability to provide a higher level of care including medications and treatment with a focus on advanced cardiac resuscitation.

Northern Health is committed to working together with you and the community, and we'll continue to share updates as we continue this work.