

Discussion Paper for Candle Lake Health Service Requirements

Prepared by the Candle Lake Health Services Committee

December 2022

1.0 Among the Saskatchewan communities with a population between 1000 – 3000 people, Candle Lake is by far, the highest growth center in the province and continues to grow.

Although our official designation is as a resort village, Candle Lake is definitely a thriving town expanding rapidly. In the past 5 years, Candle Lake permanent residents increased by 38.1%. According to the 2021 census, we now have 1160 permanent residents, (589 permanent residences).

Of equal note, Candle Lake has another 1109 private dwellings, not counted in the census. These second homes are not just vacation homes. A substantial number of these property owners will comprise the next surge of permanent residents, as many of these people invest in their second home, anticipating their future retirement here. **In the past 2 years, since the 2021 census, 82 more new homes have been added!** (as per the building permits issued).

Candle Lake is also a resort community. The spring and summer population explodes as the 841 permanent seasonal trailer sites open and the provincial parks activate with an additional 289 sites. This uncounted seasonal influx might be estimated at another 3-5000 people. These are not the principle consumers of primary health care but they certainly impact the Emergency Service requirements of the community.

It is reasonable to state that the base or permanent population of Candle Lake is 1160, as per the census, but at any time the community will have 2000 – possibly 10,000 people living here.

2.0 Population Demographics of the 1160 Permanent Residents (2021 Census):

<u>AGE</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2021</u>
1 - 14 years	50	80
15 - 49 years	150	255
50 - 64 years	330	350
65 - 69 years	130	230
70 – 74 Years	100	110
75 – 79 years	45	85
80 – 84 years	20	30
85 - 95 years	15	20

The average age of the Candle Lake permanent resident is 56 years old.

825 people or 71% of our total population is over 50 years old!

The greatest population growth is in the 65-69 year old age demographic with a 57% increase in 4 years.

3.0 Candle Lake is a growing retirement community.

Candle Lake holds all the amenities that make retirement exciting and fulfilling. The greatest rate of growth is within the 50 Plus age category. But, as life circumstances change, within an aging population, many residents are forced to leave the community when their activities of daily living need increased support or when health care requires more intensive management. This increases the burden on the already over-extended larger urban centers and forces people to leave their personal support group of friends and neighbors. Candle Lake is committed to do better and is seeking ways to support its permanent residents, as they age in place.

Candle Lake is investing in initiatives to increase community support for its residents.

Recently Candle Lake has undertaken a formalized “Needs and Demands Assessment” which will identify the demographics and service required or desired by the RVCL Community in regards to supportive services and housing for seniors. Information gathered will clarify the kind of service or projects to pursue, and determine feasibility and sustainability. The end goal is to attract investment into the community both private and government, to develop supportive housing projects and help to identify the support services that need to be augmented to sustain the growing retirement community.

4.0 Community health care services must expand with us.

Home Care, Chronic Disease Management, Emergency Services and most importantly access to Primary Health Care services all have to expand accordingly.

Candle Lake residents live approximately 85-100 KMs from the nearest physician, hospital, lab and other diagnostic services. As one of any sizable residential community in the province we need local services. (Note: The community of Candle Lake sprawls around the perimeter of Candle Lake and some residents reside 20 or more KMs from the main highway to Prince Albert which is 85 KMs to Prince Albert).

Current Primary Health Care Service:

Clinic Space - Currently the community provides a space inside the community hall for the clinic.

There is exam room, a small treatment room, an office for the Nurse Practitioner and a reception area. It is open 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM, for 10 days in every 4 week period.

The Nurse Practitioner - works half time at Candle Lake and her case load is full. She will not take on more patients. All other residents must seek all health care service elsewhere, necessitating extensive travel and straining the capacity of Prince Albert, the nearest center.

Lab Service - The NP schedules time for Phlebotomy service for only her own clients every 2 weeks. As a consequence her patient consult time is reduced by 2 days per month. There are no lab services provided inside the community and lab appointments for others must be scheduled in Prince Albert necessitating extensive travel, also straining Prince Albert resources.

ECG or other diagnostics – ECG machine is on site for use of the NP. Basic blood glucose, and urinalysis testing is available.

Home Care Services do not liaise with the Primary Health Center or the Health Services Committee of Candle Lake so we do not know the extent of utilization.

Current Emergency Service – A team of dedicated Medical First Responders are well trained and active.

They attend approximately 50 calls for medical assistance during each year.

Parkland Ambulance from Prince Albert has a 45 minute to 1 hour response time.

STARS may respond to scene. Candle Lake has no other Emergency transport.

The Candle Lake Medical First responders are the only rapid response for nearby developments in the RM of Paddockwood, including Aspen Ridge, Cranberry Creek and Candle Light Gardens. They also attend any highway incidents and emergencies on the snowmobile back country trail system and provide emergency assistance to Whalen Bay, White Swan Lake, Caribou Creek.

Pharmacy Service – Pharmasave has recently opened a pharmacy here.

5.0 Candle Lake certainly falls short in health services when compared to surrounding, similar-size, rural communities.

Spiritwood, pop. 966,
Shellbrook, pop. 1440,
Wilkie, pop. 1195,
Wadena, pop. 1127,
Wakaw, pop. 978,
Birch Hills, Pop. 1066
Rosthern, Pop. 1602.

In the past 5 years there has been a dramatic change in the growth rate of Candle Lake and all indicators point to continued growth. Situated 85 – 100 KMs from the nearest health services, it seems obvious now that our growing community needs to ramp up the basic health services available. With the increased population Candle Lake warrants the enhanced investment and in the future could serve as a new hub for the surrounding small, northern communities. Our solid base is ready to expand and improve.

6.0 Short Term Solutions Proposed

Increase the NP hours to Full Time – The people of Candle Lake speak highly of the NP here but the half time position does not support the community demands. The Candle Lake Health Committee has been lobbying SHA and the government to increase the NP service hours and to date we have been unsuccessful.

Physician Funding –Because of the chronic disease issues that go hand in hand with the age demographics the needs of the community would be best met with a contracted service position for a physician. Half time physician funding would augment and support the NP service and may partially fill the gap in the community now. Physically, the additional service could be managed in the current clinic setting. Unlike some rural sites that have difficulty enticing physicians to set up practice, at Candle Lake we are confident that there are physicians, who already have second homes here, who might defer their retirement to practice here, with the right proposal.

Provide Phlebotomy Service inside the community for basic Lab work. The provision of this service could be achieved by contracting a phlebotomist. As a retirement community, Candle Lake has the expertise within the community, ready to activate with support from SHA. A phlebotomist could immediately free 2 additional days every 4 weeks for the NP to provide patient consultation. We are exploring the extent of service required and options for provision.

Amplify Chronic Disease Management. There are provincial initiatives now for which Candle Lake would certainly qualify. These services need to be explored, applied for and initiated.

Amplify Community Home Care Services. Establish a communication link with the Home Care service and start gathering the information that can justify regular scheduled attendance in the community that might improve support to the population.

Consider Paramedic Community Services for the Summer Months when the population surges. Programs similar to the paramedic staffed Mobile Health Units provided in Saskatoon, might be explored. This is the busiest time for our Medical First Responders; they are dedicated and enthusiastic but still a volunteer group. The less comprehensive care required for the summer resort population, if provided here, may decrease the attendance at Prince Albert Minor Emergency Clinics and the Emergency Dept. Additionally, the emergent needs of the summer population will be better met with the next level of care readily available and able to provide timelier transport to tertiary care.

Investigate Digital Health Services – Virtual Care Options

Identify the types of digital service the community requires. Identify space, equipment and support staff required to access and promote use of telehealth in the community.

7.0 Looking to the Future:

Investment in Candle Lake Primary Health Care Services now, will benefit the province and the region in multiple ways:

- Timely and ongoing management of the chronic health care needs of the growing elderly population provides better quality of life and decreases the crisis intervention required when neglected.
- Supporting increased NP and new Physician service in Candle Lake will decrease the pressure in the Prince Albert region for existing general practitioners, Minor Emergency Clinics and the Emergency Department utilization for less than Emergent needs.
- Providing funding for a community physician in Candle Lake will create the impetus for private or corporate investment in other support services for the community. These include facilities for services such as physiotherapy, chiropractic care, podiatrists, massage therapy, and dietitians to name just a few.
- Candle Lake may increase service to the small surrounding communities including Aspen ridge, Cranberry Creek, Caribou Creek, and Whalen Bay, lower Fishing Lake and other communities north of us.

Candle Lake aspires to show case itself as not just a Resort Community but as a growing retirement center. We attract residents from across the province, and western Canada. They come from prominent and varied back grounds. We want to carefully and fully support them here for as long as they choose to stay. These seniors are the giants who have built the world of today and on which we create the future. They should not be neglected.

The health and wellness issues ahead are evolving as the community expands. Ultimately, we understand we are well positioned to provide many additional services. We look forward to our continued partnership with the SHA.