



# End of an era for Williams Lake Physiotherapy

In 1983, Durfeld opened the city's first physio clinic: Williams Lake Physiotherapy Clinic (WLPC).

GREG SABATINO / Nov. 14, 2018 6:00 a.m. / [BUSINESS](#) / [LOCAL BUSINESS](#)

After 45 years working as a physiotherapist — 35 of those as a business owner in Williams Lake — Elizabeth Durfeld is ready to pass the torch.

In 1983, Durfeld opened the lakecity's first physiotherapy clinic, Williams Lake Physiotherapy Clinic (WLPC). And on Nov. 1, after many years of searching for a suitable replacement, Durfeld handed over the reins to its new owner, Surita Gaspar, who has moved to Williams Lake from South Africa to manage the clinic.

"I'd worked in West Vancouver, Burnaby, Shaughnessy, and I'd always told myself I'd never come back to Williams Lake," Durfeld said. "But when I'd come back to

visit I'd hit that area near 100 Mile, Lac la Hache, and there'd be something pulling me back.

"I know it was the people here. After working in those clinics on the Lower Mainland and seeing the high stress levels, the kindness of the people here is overwhelming. I just want to thank the people that entrusted their aches and pains to me and my hands ... I've said over and over I feel like I've had the best profession ever. We're able to continue to learn, interact with people and make a difference in peoples' lives."

Durfeld said for roughly the past 10 years she's been trying to find someone to take over WLPC, and said her biggest fear was one day she would have to close its doors for good.

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"It's tough to recruit a physio," she said. "Let alone one on the same page as I am in scope, philosophy and direction. But then, Surita came along, and I don't think by chance."

Surita is the sister of former Williams Lake physician Dr. Billy Longland, who also came to Canada from South Africa seven years ago.

Durfeld said Dr. Longland called her about three years ago to ask what type of opportunities there were in Canada for physiotherapists, and in the community.

"He said: 'I know someone from South Africa keen to come to Williams Lake,'" Durfeld said. "He explained it was his sister, and the rest is history."

Surita came to Williams Lake with her husband and two children, and began working at WLPC in the summer of 2017.

"I'm blessed," Durfeld said. "She's young, enthusiastic and a great person and now we've come to a point where she has taken over."

Surita, meanwhile, has a background in orthopedic and sports rehabilitation from her time working in South Africa where she practiced as a physiotherapist for 11 years.

"Things kind of worked out perfectly for us," she said. "We love it here. We like the small-town feel, and we're not city people at all, and there's been a big South African community here supporting us."

She also added she's fit right in at the clinic, and said everyone in the community has been so welcoming.

"The patients have been so kind, and I have no complaints at all," she said.

While keeping the quality and service patients have been known to expect at the clinic the same, Surita and Durfeld said they're excited to announce, as of Monday, Dec. 3 they will be opening at a new location above Caribou Ski Source for Sports on First Avenue.

"We are evolving and expanding," Surita said. "The morals and the passion for the job will stay the same, though."

In handing over the reins, Durfeld said she's excited for the future of WLPC and will continue to work on a part-time basis at the clinic.

“I think I’m going to miss it when I stop working,” she said.

WLPC is open Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more visit their Facebook page at Williams Lake Physiotherapy Clinic and soon-to-be-launched website.

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[sports@wltribune.com](mailto:sports@wltribune.com)

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