



**Society of Rural Physicians of Canada  
Soci t  de la m decine rurale du Canada**

## **Media Release**

### **OMA and Ontario Government Challenged to Deal with Doctor Shortage During Collective Bargaining**

TORONTO ON / January 15, 2004/ - In 1996, sixty-eight Ontario communities were short 100 family doctors. Today, 118 communities have 665 physician vacancies affecting one million Ontarians, according to Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Underserved Area Program statistics.

At Queen's Park today, an alliance of municipal leaders and physicians called on both the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) and the Minister of Health to deal directly with this 'chronic situation' while they negotiate their 2004 Collective Agreement. Negotiations begin on January 23, 2004.

"Both the consumers and providers of health care are saying with one voice today that the OMA and the Government have a unique opportunity, during negotiations, to deal with this issue by agreeing to a package of incentive measures" said Richard Adams, Parry Sound Councillor and Vice President of AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

"This is an outrageous, frightening and unacceptable situation," said Kenora Councillor Ingrid Parkes.

Mr. Adams and Ms. Parkes have joined with some physician groups to form the NOW Alliance, Negotiating Ontario's Well-Being, and press this issue during OMA/Government negotiations, and beyond. The Alliance counts eleven founding organizations.

"The OMA Agreement sets remuneration and working conditions for doctors and this could be an important moment to break a log jam" said Dr. Peter Hutten-Czapski, a family doctor in Haileybury and President of the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada, Ontario Region.

"This next Agreement could get more family doctors on contract than on the old fee-for-service system, a key step to filling these vacancies," said Dr. Joseph Mikhael, Past President of PAIRO, representing the younger generation of doctors who are more interested in practising in underserved areas.

NOW also launched a website [www.nowalliance.ca](http://www.nowalliance.ca) and a petition, and announced town hall meetings to discuss its 19 point Rural Health Action Plan, the first one being in Chatham at 6pm on January 30th.

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### **Backgrounder**

#### *About the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada*

The Society of Rural Physicians of Canada (SRPC) is the national voice of Canadian rural physicians. Founded in 1992, the SRPC's mission is to provide leadership for rural physicians and to promote sustainable conditions and equitable health care for rural communities.

On behalf of its members and the Canadian public, SRPC performs a wide variety of functions, such as developing and advocating health delivery mechanisms, supporting rural doctors and communities in crisis, promoting and delivering rural medical education, encouraging and facilitating research into rural health issues, and fostering communication among rural physicians and other groups with an interest in rural health care.

The SRPC is a voluntary professional organization representing over 1,800 of Canada's rural physicians and comprising 5 regional divisions spanning the country reference <http://www.srpc.ca>

#### *About the NOW Alliance*

The NOW alliance is a grassroots coalition of community, municipal, educator and physician groups, formed in 1999, committed to improving physician recruitment and retention in Ontario.

The NOW mandate is to ensure that the Government and the OMA work together in their negotiations for a new agreement on physician funding and physician services, to ensure that underserved communities across Ontario get and keep the physicians they need and deserve.

Members of the NOW alliance include Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Chatham Kent Health Alliance, Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce, Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, OMA Section on Rural Practice, Ontario Region Society of Rural Physicians of Canada, Ontario College of Family Physicians, Professional Association of Internes and Residents of Ontario, Rural Ontario Medical Program, Southwestern Ontario Rural Regional

Medicine.