



Society of Rural Physicians of Canada
Société de la médecine rurale du Canada

Media Release

Kirby Commission on Health on the right Track - say Doctors

HAILEYBURY ON /Jan 30, 2002/ - The Society of Rural Physicians of Canada congratulates Senator Kirby and his committee on their work published yesterday on health care. "It is pleasing to see recognition that the 30 percent of Canadians that are rural have unique health care needs not being well met by the current system. It is only by defining the problem can we start to address the solutions." remarked Society of Rural Physicians President Dr Peter Hutten-Czapski.

The report highlights that rural people are sicker, and that, "Rural realities and health needs differ from those of urban areas." While this means that rural people need more care the report points out, "Doctors are concentrated where the most healthy people in the country live, and the sickest populations have the least access to health care."

Distinct options are listed in the report to deal with issues such as

1. Reserving undergraduate medical school places for qualified applicants willing to commit to rural area practice;
2. Revising admission criteria for medical schools to favour qualified rural applicants;
3. Enhancing rural area exposure in both undergraduate and post-MD training;
4. Developing new residency training programs designed explicitly to prepare specialists to serve as rural regional consultants;
5. Introducing or increasing financial incentives to encourage choices of specialties in short rural supply.

Above all, the SRPC strongly endorses the call for greater federal involvement in addressing the national systemic challenges of delivering health care to our sprawling country. This need for a "pan-Canadian" solution has been echoed in many other studies in the past. Unfortunately the Kirby Report is more vague on how this could be accomplished, but a fully funded federal National Rural Health Strategy, pioneering innovative federal-provincial cooperation, appears essential.

The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology released Volumes Two and Three of a series of reports on its ongoing study of the role of the federal government in health care on January 29th.

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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 1,100 of Canada's rural physicians and comprising 5 regional divisions spanning the country