



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

Media Release

Northern Physicians Retention Initiative a Step Forward - Rural Doctors Say

DRYDEN /July 11, 2001/ - Today's announcement of a government plan that gives northern doctors an bonus to help retain them recognises the commitment that Northern physicians have to their communities despite increased workloads. It doesn't address the difference in working conditions between urban and rural physicians, nor the retention problems in rural communities outside the north.

The Underserviced Areas Program for recruiting physicians to needy communities has been successful in attracting physicians, but the main problem is that they don't stay. This new Northern retention program is a beginning in addressing the need to keep physicians in these areas. Dr Karl Stobbe points out "This is the first time a program has been designed specifically to reduce the revolving door effect long seen in rural areas and the government should be commended for it. The retention program should be enhanced for northern rural communities and extended to all of rural Ontario."

Dr Mark Whittaker says "All rural communities have a large physician turnover, and the smallest ones are the hardest ones to keep serviced. The OMA MoH contract is supposed to provide a retention plan for them as well and is overdue."

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Backgrounder

Details of the NPRI

see <http://www.srpc.ca/ontario.html>

Retention Programs in BC and Quebec

Retention of physicians in hard to recruit regions has been recognised for years. In BC physicians are paid a premium between 5 and 30% of their billings depending on how small and remote their community is.

In Quebec retention payments are also based on a premium. For years, really rural or remote areas would get more money at 115% of the schedule as long as you work there. This has increased in 2000 for Hospital and institutional work in remote regions to 125% of the urban fee schedule from the fourth year of practice, and to 130% beginning in the seventh year of rural practice. Remuneration in the office and in CLSC's not participating in the on-call system increases to 120% in the fourth year of practice.

For the smallest and most isolated regions in Quebec remuneration for all work is increased to 125% after the first year of practice and becomes 130% in the fourth year of practice. For specialists remote pay is 140% after 3 years of rural tenure.

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

The MoHLTC - OMA Agreement

The 2000 OMA and the MOHLTC agreed to "review the urgent need for physician recruitment and retention in underserved areas. This task shall be given priority by the PSC and it shall make recommendations to the parties by November 30, 2000. The initial sites to be considered include the northern urban referral sites." Southern under serviced areas have not been addressed by the Northern Physicians Retention Initiative

Research Findings

BC data shows that attrition in the smallest BC communities (under 7000 pop) was twice that of communities over 7,000 and under 30 000 population. In these communities, most cancer patients outlive the tenure of their physician (4 years).

Thommasen HV. Physician retention and recruitment outside urban British Columbia BC Medical Journal 2000;42(6): 304-308. <http://www.bcma.org/BCMJJ/August2000/PhysicianRetention.asp>