



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

Media Release

Neglected Federal Report Calls for Rural Health Investment

HAILEYBURY ON / March 11, 2003/ - The Society of Rural Physicians claims that Health Canada is continuing to ignore the needs of rural Canadians. Dr Hutten-Czapski says "Study after study indicates that rural Canadians suffer more sickness and injury and higher death rates than urban citizens and yet have the least access to services - but no one is listening." The latest example is the report of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Rural Health. This report has been languishing since November, only now being released. The funding of this committee has been cut from \$150,000 per year to nothing for the rest of its 3 year term."

The report states that "strong federal leadership" is required "to ensure that rural health becomes a nationwide priority and that rural, remote, northern and Aboriginal communities have a healthy and sustainable future."

Amongst the 43 recommendations is one for a pan-Canadian health human resources strategy, which would include addressing barriers for rural and Aboriginal health training in Canadian medical and nursing schools. Other recommendations include rural health innovation centres similar to the Australian model, and integrating traditional medicine and healing practices into existing Aboriginal health services.

The Romanow report tabled last November called for the creation of a \$1.5 billion Rural and Remote Access Fund to address serious challenges in health care in rural and remote areas of Canada. This was the only one of five short-term funds that did not make it into the February 2003 health accord. This omission Mr. Romanow was critical of in a public lecture at the University of Regina.

Even the northern premiers, dealing with the most extreme problems faced by rural Canada received only a belated top up after weeks of having officials camped out in Ottawa.

Dr Hutten-Czapski continues “Since 1999 with the Baerer Stoddart this government has commissioned reports that consistently point out the need for a pan-Canadian approach to the needs of rural Canadians.”

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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 1,300 of Canada's rural physicians and comprising 5 regional divisions spanning the country reference <http://www.srpc.ca>