



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

Media Release

The Northern Rural Medical School Starting to Roll

THUNDER BAY / May 23rd, 2001/ - Dr Peter Hutten-Czapski of the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada flew to Thunder Bay May 23rd to take part in a meeting with the northern mayors regarding moving forward with the new Northern Ontario Rural Medical School (NORMS). He says that "Rural doctors in Ontario's north feel strongly that the north needs to get on with a rural school, and work co-operatively and see what can be accomplished."

He said that "People in the north have hope that this school may be part of the solution for a chronic lack of doctors." "Medical education literature shows that what is important is that rural people get accepted into the school and that the curriculum gives doctors the knowledge and skills to practice in rural and northern communities."

Dr Peter Hutten Czapski pointing out that there has been disappointment in Thunder Bay that the administrative centre for the school has been placed in Sudbury but the purpose of the school is produce doctors for all of Northern Ontario.

Dr Peter Hutten-Czapski expressed a personal hope that as the details of faculty, deans, research issues, governance, and where the medical students are going to be, are sorted out, that all of northern Ontario can share with a distributed four year teaching model.

In the meeting a motion was unanimously endorsed that:

"We are committed to working with the Ministry of Health and Long term care and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines to develop the business plan for a northern medical school which is consistent with the general principles of the NORMS proposal."

Drs Hutten-Czapski and Len Kelly of the SRPC sit on the NORMS liaison council which will provide the initial governance for the new medical school.

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

Research Findings of Educational Issues Critical to Distributing Physicians

Both Carter (CMAJ 1987 Feb 15;136(4):366-8) and Godwin (CMAJ 1999 April 20;160(8):1159) have found that medical students of rural origin were 2 to 3 fold more likely to practice in rural areas. These results closely parallel studies performed in the United States and Australia that show that a rural admission policy linked with a rural curriculum and rural experience can dramatically increase the number of doctors who choose to practice in underserved areas.
<http://www.cma.ca/cmaj/vol-160/issue-8/1159.htm>

NORMS Announcement

The Northern Ontario Rural Medical School of 55 seats was announced by Health Minister Tony Clement on April 17th, 2001 in Sudbury.

Existing Ontario Medical Schools do not produce large numbers of rural doctors

Only 8% (168) of the 2076 graduates of Ontario medical schools from 1993 to 1998 are in rural practice. (Source CAPER)

How Many Medical Students Are Enough

Nationally medical school graduates peaked in number at 1,835 in the year 1985. Subsequently cutbacks have dwindled the number of medical students graduating to 1,577 in 1997. With the announced Ontario government increases enrolment of 160 the ratio in Ontario will climb to one student for 15,539 population by 2005

Population per Medical Student (source ACMC, The Lancet)

Ontario (2000) 20,200 Alberta 14,000

Canada (2000) 18,000 Australia 13,500

United States 14,700 Britain 12,000