



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

PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rural Doctors Suggest Solution for Thunder Bay Regional Hospital

ATIKOKAN ON / September 7th 2004 / - The Ontario Region of the Society of Rural Physicians has offered solutions to allow the regional hospital to open to the region. In a submission to Mr Tom Closson, Special Advisor, Dr Hutten-Czapski says "Rationing on the basis of an arbitrary city boundary is abhorrent." The sickest should be able to get into hospital regardless of where they live.

Dr. Steven Arif, executive member ON-SRPC adds "In our meeting last week we have presented several examples of how other hospitals in Canada serve their regions full time. All that is necessary is a willingness to work with the region to ensure priority goes to care for the sickest patients." Thunder Bay Regional Hospital, despite a large capital campaign for funding in the region, has been closing its beds to patients from outside the city most days. Currently data show that about 60% of air ambulance flights originating from the North West have to leave the region at great delay and risk to patients, and additional expense to the public purse.

In Quebec, regardless of congestion, big city hospitals always take in transfers from the regions when the patients need specialty care. In Australia federal law prohibits regional hospitals from refusing patients that are sent in from rural hospitals. For most of the North West, when Thunder Bay is closed, the next specialist hospital is several hundreds of miles further away to travel in pain and fear.

In the spring the government appointed Tom Closson as special advisor to look into difficulties at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. A report is expected next spring.

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Contact: Dr. Peter Hutten-Czapski
Ontario Society of Rural
Physicians

Dr Steven Arif
Chief of Staff, Atikokan General
Hospital

(705) 672-2442

(807)-597-1499

Backgrounder

Submission to Special Advisor Closson

The Society of Rural Physicians submission to Mr Closson is at srpc.ca/Media/ClossonThunderBayRegional.pdf and srpc.ca/librarydocs/RegionalizationSRPC.pdf

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>