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## President's Message – A national advanced skills and training program for rural practice

As rural physicians, we pride ourselves on being generalists, with flexibility, a broad knowledge base, and a willingness to learn new skills to serve our patients. Our training prepares us well for this, and we find great satisfaction in the variety and challenge of our work. However, sometimes, we notice a pattern evolving, where the same issue requiring patient transfer seems to present itself, new diseases occur with increased frequency, or the departure of a valued colleague means a sudden need for enhanced skills within our community.

Depending on where in this country a physician works, access to advanced skills training can be difficult to obtain once residency is complete. There are also the challenges of securing locum support, and the financial strain of leaving one's practice to complete training, while overhead and costs of living remain.

For these reasons, the SRPC is thrilled to announce the launch of a National Advanced Skills and Training Program for Rural Practice. In partnership with the Foundation for Advancing Family Medicine (FAFM), we are collaborating with multiple partner organisations to broaden the capacity of inter-professional comprehensive primary care in Canada, with an overall goal of addressing

critical labour shortages and enhancing labour mobility and utilisation.

The SRPC's key role is to administer a program that offers support for physicians to access a variety of existing training opportunities to increase their generalist skill set, to fill gaps identified by individual physicians and communities. This project has been modelled after the Rural Coordination Centre of British Columbia's Advanced Skills and Training Program. The FAFM has granted the SRPC funding that will allow us to offer numerous rural family physicians funding for training, income replacement and locum support, to meet an identified clinical need in the practice communities they serve. We feel this program will result in an increased ability to attract, develop and retain physicians in rural and indigenous communities. In addition, we hope that the relationships forged through training will enhance networks of care and offer valuable mentorship opportunities to participants. A robust evaluation and review process is planned, with the goal of securing funding on an ongoing basis.

While the SRPC is excited to offer this new opportunity to our members, we hope that this is only the beginning of enhanced training, mentorship and educational opportunities we offer to rural and remote healthcare providers across the country.

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