

May 13, 2011

Mayor Bernice Magee
Village of Burns Lake
Box 570, Burns Lake, BC
V0J 1E0

Dear Mayor Magee:

I am writing to you on behalf of UBCM to let you know how we have addressed the enactment clause in your resolution 2010- B112, Improved Training for Rural General Practitioners.

Your resolution asked, "that UBCM work with the necessary government ministries and medical education programs to identify and develop appropriate changes in the Canadian medical education system required to ensure that general practitioners can meet the needs of rural Canadians, such as proficiency in surgery, anesthesia and obstetrics".

This resolution was forwarded to the Healthy Communities Committee and we took the following actions to address the request:

- 1) We researched medical education programs in BC to understand if there were schools in the province that work to ensure general practitioners can meet the needs of rural British Columbians.

We learned that the Northern Medical Program at the University of Northern British Columbia educated physicians in the north on remote, rural and aboriginal health issues; and included clinical education in surgery, anaesthesia and obstetrics.

- 2) We then sought advice from the Northern Medical Program (NMP) to see how UBCM can support their work.

The NMP suggested that UBCM focus on attracting and retaining physicians to rural and remote areas, rather than working to change the education system to ensure rural physicians are trained in specialties. NMP's reasoning was that there were additional training opportunities, with funding assistance, available for doctors already working in rural areas of BC.

3) We also spoke with the Rural Coordinating Center of BC and the physician recruitment lead at Northern Health Authority what they do to attract and retain physicians in rural and remote areas of BC.

4) We looked at the role that local governments can play to attract and recruit physicians to their communities.

A best practice example, that has been featured at previous UBCM Conventions and won an Excellence Award in 2008, is a physician recruitment model in the Creston Valley area. The Regional District of Central Kootenay, the Town of Creston, the Interior Health Authority (IHA), local doctors, and the Creston Valley Development Authority partnered on this project to hire a recruitment advisor on an as-needed basis to act as an ambassador for the community to candidates, answer questions and provide information about the community.

Activities of the recruitment advisor included:

- Facilitating housing for locums (both short term and long term)
- Investigating job possibilities for spouses and family members
- Arranging itinerary for visiting doctors
- Finding rental accommodations for relocating physicians
- Developing a recruitment package and website
- Producing welcome packages of local products to visiting

The above actions were taken to address your resolution. I understand that the Province has also provided a formal response, which identified provincial actions and initiatives with respect to improved training for general practitioners.

Health care human resources in rural and remote communities is a priority issue for the Healthy Communities Committee. Therefore, we will continue to monitor the issue and advocate for physicians in rural and remote areas of the BC that can meet the needs of rural residents.

Sincerely,



Al Richmond
Chair, Healthy Communities Committee