

Report Calls for New Ways to Fix Physician Shortages in Canada

May 16, 2006 (OTTAWA) – Task Force Two today released their final report that proposes a new pan-Canadian approach for improving the way physicians in Canada are educated, recruited and retained – all with a view to ensuring Canadians have access to qualified physicians in the right place and at the right time. The report's strategies are timely as the changing needs of the population, health professionals and funders of the health care system are increasing and adding to the complexity of the physician shortage issue.

The final report proposes long-term strategies for moving forward in five key aspects of physician human resources: education and training; interprofessionalism; recruitment and retention; licensure, regulatory issues and liability; and, infrastructure and technology.

“The recommendations made in the report should be considered as an integrated package,” explained Dr. Hugh Scully, Co-Chair of Task Force Two. “Selective action on only some of these strategies will simply not generate the results that are so needed by patients, health care professionals and institutions in this country.”

The five major strategies recommended by Task Force Two are listed below.

- 1. Preparing for the Future – *Education and Training***
Education and training of physicians and other health care providers throughout their professional life cycle must meet the needs of Canada's diverse populations.
- 2. Making Teamwork Work – *Interprofessional Practice and Education***
Interprofessional collaborative practice where physicians and other health care providers have clearly identified and valued roles.
- 3. Attracting Physicians and Keeping Them Here - *Recruitment and Retention***
A pan-Canadian approach is required for ongoing human resources planning for physicians and other health care providers. This approach must include needs-based factors and must incorporate a coherent and comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy.

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4. Clearing the Legal Hurdles – *Improving Licensure, Regulatory Issues and Liability*

Complementary regulatory decisions that support both patient-centered practice and provider mobility.

5. Making the Most of the Physicians We Have – *Infrastructure and Technology*

Ensure that critical components that support effective and efficient system delivery and interoperability are expanded to assist physicians and other providers to deliver quality health care at all practice sites and points of care in a timely manner.

Five years ago, members of the Task Force Two Steering Committee knew that solving the shortage of physicians in Canada would not be accomplished in weeks or even months. Co-Chaired by Dr. Michel Brazeau, Dr. Nick Busing and Dr. Hugh Scully, they embarked on a process of finding solutions for the future – one that was thorough, informed, consultative and carefully considered. The work of Task Force Two was guided by a 31 member Steering Committee composed of diverse health care professional associations, government representation from federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions, the medical education community and lay representatives.

The five-year multi-phase initiative had a budget of \$4.8 million funded in part by the Government of Canada's Sector Council Program, Health Canada and the medical community (\$1.6 million of cash and in-kind contributions).

To better understand the factors of physician shortage, Task Force Two commissioned a number of important studies into the delivery of health care and the medical labour force in Canada. They also consulted with governments, the medical profession, health human resource (HHR) planners, health care providers and more than 130 delegates at a national conference to carefully consider and apply the findings of their research. The result of all this work and consultation is compiled in the Group's final strategy report appropriately entitled *A Physician Human Resource Strategy for Canada – Final Report*.

The strategic directions and the coalition of health care stakeholders that contributed to their formation represent a valuable resource and Canada's health care system must now make the very most of them. As this report represents the last instalment of Task Force Two's mandate, the recommended strategies will help to ensure an adequate number of physicians are working effectively and offering the right care, at the right time, in the right areas of the country.

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Task Force Two has brought together, in an unprecedented fashion, Canada's leading health professional organizations, in partnership with all levels of government, to investigate and propose innovative long-term human resources strategies.

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For a copy of the report or to read previous Task Force Two reports go to www.physicianhr.ca.
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