



**A Physician Human Resource
Strategy for Canada**

**Une stratégie en matière d'effectifs
médicaux pour le Canada**

TASK FORCE TWO

GRUPE DE TRAVAIL DEUX

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Significant gaps in knowledge must be overcome to build a human resource strategy for physicians in Canada

**Group develops long-term solutions to
shortages, stress and burn out of doctors**

March 18, 2003 (OTTAWA) – The release today of the first research report by Task Force Two marks an important stage in the development of a physician human resource strategy for Canada. Task Force Two brings 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 physician human resource strategies. These strategies will help ensure that Canadians have access to physicians with the necessary skills and knowledge to respond to their health care needs.

“Recent reports published by Statistics Canada and the Canadian Medical Association Journal make it clear that Canada's supply of doctors won't be able to address the health needs of Canadians unless we develop and implement an integrated human resources strategy for physicians in this country,” explained Dr. Hugh Scully, co-chair of the Task Force. “Our role is to develop that strategy and ensure it is based on scientific evidence and wide consultation with other health professions, governments and patient groups.”

“Physician Workforce in Canada: Literature Review and Gap Analysis” identifies gaps in our knowledge that should be addressed in developing an effective human resources strategy for physicians in Canada. The authors identified, analyzed and assessed the information on the physician workforce published since 1990. In all, the authors reviewed 196 different monographs, studies, reports and other documents. They also conducted 31 interviews with key informants.

The report provides an overview of the environment in which physicians work, and a summary of the many important trends and issues that are shaping the physician workforce today. Most importantly, the report identifies several areas in which significant information gaps exist in our country's current understanding of the physician workforce. Specifically, the report notes gaps in the understanding of:

- Certain aspects of the profile of the physician workforce in Canada;
- Changes to the physician environment and how those will affect human resources planning;
- Patient needs and demand for medical services;

.../more

- How changes to the scope of practice for physicians (those services and procedures only licensed physicians are allowed to provide) will affect physician human resources;
- How medical schools and teaching hospitals will have to evolve to meet changes in physician human resources needs;
- How advances in medical knowledge and technology will affect human resources planning for physicians; and
- Gaps in access to data and on-going research to keep pace with the constant changes to Canada's healthcare system

Dr. Scully stressed that these gaps must be addressed in order to develop an effective human resources strategy for physicians. "The issue is an urgent one but developing the best solution still requires time. We need to continue to work collaboratively with all other major health professions and ensure we truly understand the root causes of the issue. We need to accurately project into the future before we can make recommendations. And we need to review the wide range of current and emerging models for how to deliver healthcare before we can begin recommending a small number of those."

The work of gathering more information and analysing it will come in the second phase of the Task Force's work, expected to last 18 to 20 months. From there, the third phase will see the group developing long-term human resource strategies to ensure Canadians have qualified doctors, working alongside allied health professionals, offering the right services in the right regions of the country. Phase three is expected to be completed by September 2005.

Task Force Two: A Physician Human Resource Strategy for Canada has developed a Web site to share its information and interact with stakeholders in the process. The site, www.physicianhr.ca, will enable Canadians to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges at hand and the progress being made by Task Force Two. The full text of "Physician Workforce in Canada: Literature Review and Gap Analysis," is available on the site in PDF format.

Task Force Two: A Physician Human Resource Strategy for Canada is a three-phase, \$4.8 million project. The work is made possible in part through the financial support of the Government of Canada coupled with the time and energy offered by physicians, representatives from provincial and territorial governments, and other concerned individuals in the health community.

-30-

A backgrounder is also available on the www.physicianhr.ca Web site. For additional information, please contact:

Bernard Gauthier
Delta Media
(613) 233-9191
leslie@delta-media.com or bernard@delta-media.com