



Dr. Tzu-Kuang (T.K.) Lee

The President's Letter

August 16, 2006

Dear Member:

Physician shortages - by the numbers

Despite a province with financial windfalls and prosperity, it is upsetting that many Albertans still do not have timely access to doctors or timely access to care. Alberta has an immediate shortage of over 1,000 physicians, which will soon increase to 1,500 in less than five short years.

The Physician Resource Planning Committee (PRPC), co-chaired by Alberta Health and Wellness and the Alberta Medical Association, is responsible for researching and projecting physician shortages in Alberta. In its first report in 2000, PRPC indicated an immediate shortage of 333 physicians and predicted a shortage of 1,329 physicians by 2005. The draft 2005 PRPC report now indicates the current estimated shortage is 1,088 physicians with a predicted shortage of 1,541 by 2010.

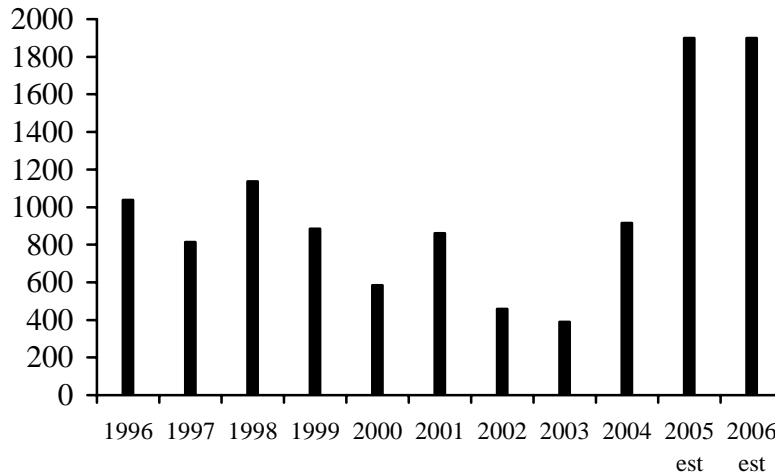
Physician Shortages Reported by Physician Resource Planning Committee (PRPC) <i>Measured in full-time equivalents (FTEs)</i>				
Report Year	Number of Physicians	Current Shortage	Projected Physicians Needed	Projected Shortage
2000	4,579	333	5,909 by 2005	1,329 by 2005
2005	5,613	1,088	8,360 by 2010	1,541 by 2010

Sources: 2000 PRPC Report Data, Draft 2005 PRPC Report Data.

Alberta has had an average net increase of just over 200 doctors annually for the past five years. Even with this level of growth continuing, and all other factors remaining the same, Alberta will still be over 1,500 physicians short by 2010. If we hope to address the predicted shortages, Alberta will need to add 500 new physicians per year for the next five years.

One component affecting physician shortages is the rate of physician retirement. Alberta's physicians, since 2003, have been retiring at a steady rate (585 in 2003, 597 in 2004, and 618 in 2005). This reflects what is happening across the country. Since 2003, the number of Canadian physicians intending to retire has increased steadily.

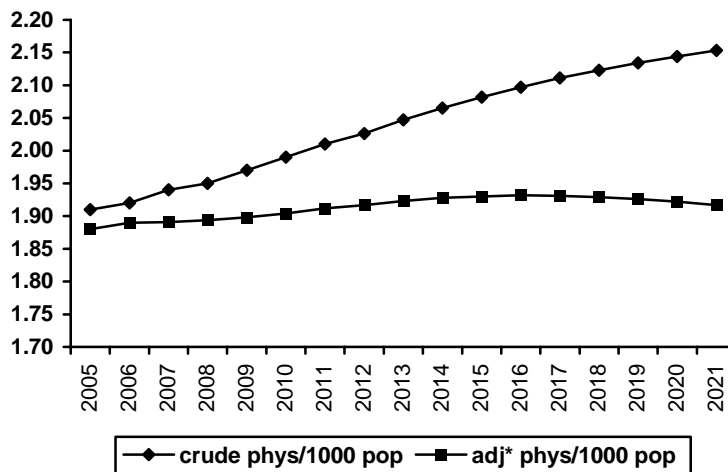
Number of Canadian Physicians Intending to Retire (estimated)



Estimates for 2005 and 2006 were based on physician intention to retire reported in the survey. Data indicates a possible decline in clinicians but not pure retirement from the medical profession. *Source: 2004 National Physician Survey.*

Alberta's aging population is also impacting physician services. As Albertans get older they require more medical services, as well as more intensive and complicated treatments. Hospitals have fewer beds but more complicated cases, and patients, left in the community, are sicker than they used to be. The Canadian Medical Association demonstrates the effects an aging population has on physician supply in the graph below.

Projected Physician Supply in Canada - MDs per 1,000 population



*Adjusted physician/1,000 population takes into consideration Canada's aging population and intensity at which physician services are used. **Source:** *CMA Physician Resource Evaluation Template, Canadian Medical Association.*

Alberta needs to focus its efforts on physician recruitment and retention. A system that provides timely access, quality care and puts Patients First® must be a key feature of the Alberta Advantage.

Yours truly,

Tzu-Kuang (T.K.) Lee, MB, BS
President

Patients First® is a registered trademark of the Alberta Medical Association.