



Dr. G.N. (Gerry) Kiefer

The President's Letter

January 19, 2007

Dear Member:

For the foreseeable future, unfortunately, patient care in Alberta will suffer from a shortage of family physicians and specialists. The current shortage is more than 1,000 physicians, and it is predicted to climb to 1,500 physicians within the next two or three years.

The problem is more severe in some areas than in others. Through the trilateral process, the Alberta Medical Association (AMA) is prepared to work with the Provincial Government and the regional health authorities in developing short-term and long-term solutions.

With this province-wide shortage of physicians, there are locations in Alberta that historically have faced additional challenges and today are suffering even more. For them, recruitment and retention become even more difficult when physicians can easily locate to major centres throughout North America.

Our actions will be guided by the *AMA Under-Serviced Areas Position Statement*, which the Board of Directors has just approved. The statement is attached; it is also available on the AMA website at <http://www.albertadoctors.org/Advocacy/GovernmentAffairs>.

Key elements of the *AMA Under-Serviced Areas Position Statement* are:

- A “provincial framework, with designated funding”
- The “existing consensus supplement process” under the trilateral agreement, but with designated funding and with “clear policies and process”
- Financial incentives “for physicians practising in difficult-to-recruit/retain areas”
- Specific financial support “on a timely basis to physicians practising within communities deemed to be in crisis”

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Please review the position statement and provide your feedback on how these proposals might be structured. The AMA will continue consulting with the sections whose members could be most affected.

In closing, if you have not already done so, I again urge you to write to your MLA, the minister of health and wellness and the premier (and "cc" the AMA) about the pressures that you face daily as you endeavor to deliver quality care and to put Patients First®.

Yours truly,

G.N. (Gerry) Kiefer, MD, FRCSC
President

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