

June 1, 2006

Don Cousens
Mayor
Town of Markham
101 Town Centre Boulevard
Markham, ON L3R 9W3

To Clerk
From Don Cousens
Council Agenda



THE
COLLEGE
OF
PHYSICIANS
AND
SURGEONS
OF
ONTARIO

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Dear Mayor:

A number of municipal councils throughout Ontario have recently passed resolutions regarding improving access to family physicians in Ontario. We would like to take this opportunity to provide you and your fellow Council members with an overview of the actions that the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario has been taking to increase the number of licensed physicians in Ontario, as well as convey our 2005 registration statistics.

The core function of the College is to regulate the medical profession in the public interest. This includes ensuring that anyone who receives a license to practise medicine in Ontario has the skills and training to do so safely and effectively. We issue certificates of registration to doctors to allow them to practise medicine, monitor and maintain standards of practice through peer assessment and remediation, investigate complaints against doctors on behalf of the public, and discipline doctors who are guilty of professional misconduct or incompetence.

One of our top priorities for the last few years has been to find creative ways to address the lack of physicians in this province. Past initiatives have included the publication of *Tackling the Doctor Shortage*, a discussion paper providing recommendations directed to government and all stakeholders, including the College, that were designed to increase access to physicians. A copy of the paper is available at: www.cpso.on.ca/Info_physicians/physres.htm. Our initiatives have included working with Ontario's Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Government of Canada and other partners to develop new pathways for foreign-trained physicians to become licensed to practice medicine in Ontario.

As a result, we have had a number of recent successes as illustrated by our 2005 registration statistics. For example, 2005 marked the second year in a row that the College granted more medical licenses to International Medical Graduates (IMGs) than Ontario medical school graduates. This includes 1,082 certificates issued to IMGs, graduating from 91 different countries. Also, the total number of certificates issued in 2005 was the highest annual total in 20 years. A copy of our 2005 registration statistics is enclosed.

However, we recognize that more work must be done. Our 2004 and preliminary 2005 annual member survey results clearly demonstrate that much greater action and attention by government and other health stakeholders is immediately required to ensure patient access to medical care. The number of general practitioners accepting new patients dropped from 39% in 2000 to 16.5% in 2004. We believe that this percentage has decreased even further in 2005.

To increase the number of physicians in Ontario, we continue to advocate for the government to increase enrolment at Ontario's medical schools and post-graduate training positions. While the government has moved forward on these initiatives, we would like these spots to be further increased to address the future growing health care needs of our population.

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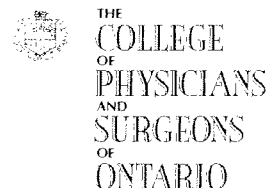
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We are also pleased that in 2006, the government allowed IMGs to apply for residency positions in Ontario during their final year of medical school. This included Canadian/Ontarian residents who were studying abroad. We are requesting that this policy is repeated in 2007.

In addition, the launch of *IMG-Ontario*, which provides access to professional practice in Ontario for IMGs who meet the Ontario regulatory requirements, has been a great success. We are requesting that the government continue to support this initiative.

Furthermore, we are pleased of the government's recently announced new health human resources strategy, *HealthForceOntario*. The strategy includes a commitment to repatriate physicians from Ontario who have left to work in other jurisdictions within North America. We are supportive of this direction and look forward to learning more about the specifics of the plan.

Other initiatives that we have been advocating to the provincial government include the creation of a health human resources planning body and the consideration of potential collaborative care models.

We look forward to continuing to working with government and other stakeholders to address these challenges. Moreover, we at the College recognize the important contributions many municipalities are making towards finding creative solutions that meet the unique needs of their communities. We also encourage you to work with government, as we are, to improve patient access to physicians.

On a final note, we are aware that your constituents may contact you to discuss being unable to find a doctor. The College's Doctor Search Service may be able to help. In fact, the College is the only organization in the province that offers this service for members of the public. Doctor Search can be accessed by telephoning (416) 967-2626 or 1-800-268-7096 ext. 626, or by visiting www.cpso.on.ca.

We would greatly appreciate it if you would share this information with your colleagues in your municipal council. We hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,

Dale Mercer, MD, FRCSC
President

Rocco Gerace, MD
Registrar

- c. Hon. George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Brad Sinclair, Chief of Staff to the Minister
Abid Malik, Senior Policy Advisor to the Minister
Dr. Joshua Tepper, ADM, Health Human Resource Strategy Division
Pat Vanini, Executive Director, Association of Municipalities of Ontario