

Dr. Danusia Gzik

[REDACTED]

Dr. Marion Baechler

[REDACTED]

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It is with regret and complete frustration that we are withdrawing our commitment to open a family practice in Lake of Bays. We believe it is extremely unlikely that a new community clinic will be opened in the near future.

After two years of effort, we feel that no one at the Ministry of Health has taken on the task of advocating for this needed primary care clinic in what is presently an un-serviced township. The barriers to the initiation of a clinic are seemingly insurmountable at this time, and we see little effort by the Ministry of Health programs involved to create a coordinated approach to overcome the issues.

A partial listing of the existing barriers are outlined below:

Physical structure:

Lake of Bays does not have primary care clinics in any of the three major community sites, namely Dorset, Dwight or Baysville. Therefore, a site or sites must be found to host the medical clinic. In addition, the clinics must be equipped with the appropriate furnishings, computer systems, supplies etc. in order to provide a safe and appropriate clinic.

At present, there is no funding available to set up the clinic and no municipal space where it could be located.

In addition, the RNPGE contract fact sheet states that "new RNPGE Group 3's are required to have community involvement and infrastructure in place **prior** to the offering of an agreement". It is unjust to ask the community to fund the clinic when a contract is not guaranteed. Nor are the positions guaranteed even after one year. This creates high upfront risk. At present, the Lake of Bays does not have the financial resources to initiate the clinic.

Underserviced area Program Designation:

In order to have the RNPGEA contract awarded to Lake of Bays, two Underserviced area positions must be secured. At present, the two positions for Lake of Bays are tied to the Bracebridge health region. Therefore, it is necessary that the person in authority in Bracebridge, namely Dr. Dave Mathies, Chief of Staff, accept Lake of Bays application for the two positions. Ms. Lison Breton has informed us that it is our responsibility to confirm that we have secured the two positions for Lake of Bays. However, Dr. Mathies has indicated that the positions must be tied to hospital privileges in Bracebridge, even though the majority of patients seek care in the Hunstville Hospital. This is due to physician staffing shortages in Bracebridge and not to patient care issues.

We believe that it is unreasonable to have family physicians travel considerable distance to the Bracebridge hospital every day, taking significant time away from clinic, when the purpose of local physicians is to provide family medical care to patients close to home.

Regardless, we are unable to confirm that we will secure two Underserviced area positions, which we have been told are mandatory for the awarding of the RNPGEA contracts. This Underserviced area program is completed separate from the RNPGEA contract program with little to no communication between the two departments. We have been told that it is our responsibility to secure the underserviced area positions, however, we feel that the coordination of these two programs should be handled by the appropriate ministry staff and not downloaded to us.

RNPGEA contract:

We are extremely frustrated that even after having considerable email exchange with various ministry employees over a two year period, it was only at our last phone conversation that we were given the Fact Sheet on RNPGEA Group 3. This fact sheet is dated March 2007! We had no previous knowledge of the existence of this fact sheet even though it contains information regarding what the contract will contain for a community like Lake of Bays, together with expectations for both the community and the physician. It is unbelievable to us that we were not provided with this information at an earlier date.

The fact sheet contains key elements of the new RNPGEA model. We believe that several aspects of the model are not compatible with a Township such as Lake of Bays. In particular, it is necessary for physicians to roster at least 1200 patients to guarantee a full time position. The patients who choose to roster will be in general, more sick and elderly. In addition, the Township has 3 communities separated by a distance of almost 50 km. Therefore, traveling clinics have been requested by the council members in order to service all three communities. It is not reasonable to service that number of patients in this unique Township.

The benefits listed in the contract have been reduced compared to other RNPGEA modes.

There is less locum coverage together with the expectation of increased patient enrollment and service hours per week.

The RNPGA contract will be difficult to attain given the prerequisites that are listed. We feel it unlikely we will be able to secure two underserved area positions and also that the community is unlikely to provide the infrastructure prior to the contract being awarded.

We do not believe that this model takes into account the huge investment of the time and effort in starting a community-based medical clinic where one has not existed. The uncertainty of there being full-time positions at the end of one year makes the entire process too risky for all parties involved - the physicians, the community and most importantly, the patients.

Summary

At this time, we are extremely frustrated and disappointed. There is no way that we see this initiative to succeed at present. We have spent a considerable amount of our personal time and energy on this project, and we have seen little progress. We believe that the Ministry of Health programs whose mandate is to provide guidance and support for health care in underserved areas have failed with this initiative.

Lake of Bays has three communities but no primary care physician services. This township is unique and a unique solution must be developed to meet the medical needs of the community. We have tried to address this deficiency but feel that it is now time for us to withdraw our commitment. After two years and with nothing but uncertainty for the future, we have decided to pursue other career options. It is our hope that the government will work to provide the Township of Lake of Bays with the medical care the local people deserve in their own communities.

Sincerely,

Danusia Gzik, MD, CCFP, MHSc

Marion Baechler, MD, CCFP, FCFP