

## Fredericton Chamber of Commerce Says Doctor Shortage Still a Pressing Issue

For Immediate Release  
Friday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>

Fredericton Chamber President Andrew Steeves remains concerned with the continued physician shortage in the Fredericton area.

Although pleased that the wait list in the Fredericton area has recently been reduced to 2900, Andrew Steeves cautions that the pressure is still on to recruit and retain physicians. “We anticipate that 2-3 physicians will retire within the next 18 months, which will leave an additional 6000-8000 residents without a family doctor. Our government needs to be actively working now to ensure that thousands more residents of the Fredericton area do not fall outside of the formal healthcare system.”

Part of the problem with the current situation is that without a family physician, residents have no choice but to turn to walk-in clinics and hospital emergency rooms. “Walk-in clinics were intended to be a supplementary service people could turn to when they couldn’t get in to see their family doctor – not a replacement for one. These clinics are efficient at treating basic medical issues, but they’re simply not set up to manage a person’s health on an ongoing basis. As for the ER, it’s incredibly costly to provide healthcare through that system – which as the name implies is designed to handle medical emergencies. We simply cannot afford to treat the ER as a stand-in for a family physician. We began raising these points in 2008, and we are frustrated to see that in 2012 the situation remains the same.”

For the Fredericton Chamber, the physician shortage is not just a social problem, but also an economic one. “Attracting investment, entrepreneurs, and talented professionals and skilled trades people is based largely on the quality of life and amenities a community has to offer, and excellent healthcare is at the top of the list” explained Andrew Steeves. “When potential newcomers to the community hear that it can take 2-3 years to make a doctor’s patient list, we start to look a lot less appealing.”

The Fredericton Chamber will be paying close attention when the provincial government releases its budget next week. “We recognize that governments have spending constraints, and we’re in full support of government making necessary measures to balance our budget” said Andrew Steeves. “However, we also know that even in difficult times certain areas merit investment – and we are stating forcefully that access to a physician is one of them.”

*With more than 900 members, the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce is one of Atlantic Canada’s largest chambers of commerce. A dynamic and relevant business organization, the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce is actively engaged in policy development that affects the competitiveness of our members and of the Canadian business environment.*

-30-

**Contact:** Andrew Steeves | President | 458.8006