



## **M.D. of Bonnyville Media Release Rural healthcare under siege Save our rural physicians**

*March 4, 2020* – Municipalities throughout rural Northeastern Alberta are concerned that they will be seeing a lot of doctors leave their communities as a result of the latest round of healthcare changes introduced by the provincial UCP government.

Doctors have been telling rural politicians for the past two weeks that the provincial government is not listening to their concerns regarding the horrendous consequences of the new healthcare changes. And some physicians are already notifying patients that they are closing down their practices.

Local doctors want to tell their story to the public so Northeastern Alberta residents can fully understand how the healthcare changes will impact their rural communities. Physicians from Bonnyville, Cold Lake, Lac La Biche, and St. Paul are hosting a meeting on Wednesday, March 11 at 7 p.m. at the Bonnyville Seniors' Drop-In Centre (4813-47 Avenue) to talk about their frustrations with the changes brought down in last week's provincial budget.

The healthcare budget cutbacks mean much shorter visits with doctors and longer wait times for appointments. Patients with complicated health issues will need to book multiple visits. There will be longer wait times for specialist referrals. Doctors are telling provincial officials that these changes will mean more emergency room visits, which will actually increase healthcare costs.

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The compensation changes adversely affect rural doctors because, by necessity, they have both a clinic and emergency room practice. Having reviewed the numbers and the impacts on their practices, many doctors will leave our communities for friendlier environments in other provinces, the United States and elsewhere in the world. Recruitment agencies are already flooding the province to snap up those professionals interested in leaving.

Rural communities, which previously had a hard time recruiting General Practitioners, now have an almost impossible struggle to fill the empty offices within the current Provincial environment.

Municipal District of Bonnyville Reeve Greg Sawchuk and Town of Bonnyville Mayor Gene Sobolewski say these provincial budget changes and the effects will decimate rural healthcare.

“We urge our residents to come out to hear the doctors’ presentation and then start lobbying the Premier and Health Minister to reconsider these drastic cuts.”

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**For more information, contact:**

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County of St. Paul Reeve Steve Upham – 780-614-5107

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