

## INCENTIVE PROGRAMS FOR RURAL B.C. DOCTORS

### Subsidiary agreement for physicians in rural practice

- The program is designed to address doctor shortages in rural areas by giving those who practise in these areas a wide range of incentives and benefits. A list of communities that qualify for rural benefits is attached.
- The following benefits are available under the rural subsidiary agreement:
  1. Rural retention premiums: Doctors working in rural areas will receive extra premiums in addition to their regular billings. Payments are based on a formula that considers the number of GPs in a community, distance from a major medical community and degree of isolation. These premiums on fees are worth a total of \$45.4 million per year.
  2. Recruitment incentives: Doctors who fill vacancies or pending vacancies in rural communities, as per health authority requirements, will receive a \$10,000 signing bonus.
  3. Recruitment contingency fund: Total funding of \$300,000 is available to help health authorities recruit where it is particularly difficult to fill a vacancy, or where a vacancy will harm care.
  4. Northern and isolation travel assistance outreach program: Provides travel assistance to doctors who travel to remote communities to provide medical services. The program also provides a travel honorarium of \$500 for trips less than four hours and \$1,000 for trips over four hours.
  5. Rural education action plan: Provides \$2.25 million towards training for rural doctors. Funding can be applied to education-related costs like income loss, overhead, tuition, travel expenses, accommodation and board. The program also funds undergraduate medical students gaining rural practice experience, focuses on rural doctors' participation in medical school selection and curriculum development, and provides a first-year practice enhancement fund for new doctors and bursaries for residents willing to practise in a rural community after they graduate.
  6. Rural continuing medical education program: Gives rural doctors up to \$5,200 per year for education that updates skills and enhances credentials.
  7. Rural GP locum program: Pays locum doctors a guaranteed daily rate of \$750, plus a \$600 honorarium to provide coverage while a regular doctor is away for education, vacation or health reasons.

### **Rural locum specialist program:**

- This new provincial program will help health authorities provide specialist locum coverage while permanent specialists are recruited.
- The rural locum specialist program will pay \$1 million over 12 months to encourage visiting medical specialists to provide services in rural communities, including locum relief for specialists for vacation and education or to provide continuous coverage.
- Specialists in anesthesia, general surgery, internal medicine, orthopedics, pediatrics and obstetrics are eligible for the program.
- The program will support continuous coverage in these medical specialties by providing a visiting locum specialist with a guaranteed daily rate of \$1,000 plus fee-for-service earnings over the guaranteed amount. Specialists will also get on-call payments and a \$1,000 travel honorarium per trip.
- Campbell River, Comox/Courtenay, Cranbrook, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Nelson, Port Alberni, Powell River, Prince George, Prince Rupert/Kitimat, Smithers, Terrace, Trail and Williams Lake are eligible for the Rural Locum Specialist Program.
- These communities are expected to provide specialist services 24 hours per day, seven days a week. These communities also have historical challenges filling core specialist positions.

### **Medical on-call availability program**

- The new medical on-call availability program is separate from the rural incentive package. Doctors eligible for rural incentives will also be eligible for on-call benefits, depending on the on-call requirements designated by the health authority.
- With a budget of \$125 million per year, the program is the most generous on-call program in the country. It ensures GPs and specialists who provide on-call coverage are fairly compensated for being available, regardless of where they practise.
- The program will improve service for new or unassigned patients who need emergency care by making sure there is continuous coverage at acute care hospitals and diagnostic and treatment centres.
- On-call fees for doctors range from \$191 per day to \$616 per day, depending on the clinical urgency and expected response time.
- Health authorities are responsible for managing the on-call program, which includes determining the call group level based on community needs.

Visit the province's Web site at <http://www.gov.bc.ca/> for online information and services.

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