

Needs of people suffering from communicative disorders

from page 4
that huge territory east of Thunder Bay.

This person is located in Marathon under the auspices of the Thunder Bay District Health Unit.

People wishing to avail themselves of this service must be prepared to travel 120 miles round trip from Schreiber or Manitouwadge.

During your exchange with Mr. Foulds, you learned that the need was equally severe for communities west of Thunder Bay to the Manitoba border.

You were also reminded that 90 per cent of the speech pathologists practicing in Thunder Bay are either American citizens or those who received their training in American universities.

There are young people living in Northern Ontario who have applied to Canadian universities for placement in speech pathology courses only to be told that there are only 30 places in Toronto and London combined.

Your ministry has on file applications from Northern Ontario students who had to apply to Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, and the University of Minnesota (Duluth); one dating back to

1984, for assistance under the Bursary Program to complete their two-year masters degree in this discipline.

They were told by Dr. Copeman that the Bursary Program was under review and as soon as US schools were screened and assessed, Canadian students attending approved courses would be eligible for assistance if they undertook to practice in an underserved area in Northern Ontario.

You announced on or about August 10, 1987, that by 1990 your government will be spending an additional \$1 million annually on grants and bursaries to attract more rehabilitation professionals to the North. To date nothing tangible has resulted.

The two applicants mentioned above were forced to complete their masters courses at American schools at their own expense (one, \$35,000 for the two-year course).

Both are now practicing at a Thunder Bay Hospital at a salary much less than is available for similar positions in other Canadian centres, such as Calgary and Ottawa.

Your Underserved Area Program was successful in attracting doctors because there is a surplus in that profession.

Unfortunately, that is not the case for speech pathologists.

If nothing is done to correct the deficiencies of that program, we are in grave danger of losing the number we have at the present time to more attractive and more lucrative practices elsewhere.

These therapists were not able to take advantage of the Bursary Program because they could not gain admission to a Canadian university.

They do not appear to be eligible for the incentive program which was not in effect or announced until after they had accepted employment at a facility in Thunder Bay.

Notwithstanding a commitment from a parade of ministers, deputies and other ministry personnel, nothing has yet happened

to attract and to hold speech pathologists in the North.

You and your former deputy no longer have direct responsibility for these programs; the minister of health is new on the scene; who is going to carry out the

commitments promised since 1984?

Your comments and reassurance will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Gilles Pouliot,
MPP, Lake Nipigon Riding.

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