

Letters to the editor

Task force says healthcare must improve in north

Dear editor,

New Democrats found anything but a world-class healthcare system in last week's northern task force tour on health issues.

From May 30 to June 2, 1988, MPP's Gilles Pouliot, Howie Hampton and Shelly Martel visited Thunder Bay, Atikokan, Emo and Dryden where they received 52 submissions from 11 communities in northwestern Ontario.

The presentations by local doctors, native organizations, patients, mental health workers and other practitioners paint a disheartening picture of hardships caused by a lack of services and by the long distances that people must travel for essential health needs. For instance:

— In Atikokan, a woman rose from the crowd of 50 participants to tell how her family had to pay thousands in transportation and meals to get her husband to and from Thunder Bay three times a week for kidney dialysis — a distance of over 190 kilometers one way.

— In Thunder Bay, Heather Woodbeck of the Women's Health Information Network related how women sometimes give birth at the side of the road because they are forced to travel for hours from communities like Manitowadge to deliver their babies in a Thunder Bay hospital.

— The 750 people of Nestor Falls, 68 km north of Emo, have no resident doctor or clinic and depend on their ambulance service.

Lee Molitor, the coordinator of ambulance service, is prohibited from receiving training as a paramedic. Furthermore, his radio

won't work until very close to the receiving hospital. He sometimes feels helpless as a person "slips away in the back of (the) ambulance."

—In Dryden, the task force sat in stunned silence as Geraldine Savian described how her husband, Mario, almost died of a brain tumour because he went on a waiting list for a CAT scan of seven weeks in Thunder Bay, or three months in Winnipeg. Instead of waiting, Mario went to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester where he was tested immediately. He then spent the next three days on the operating table in a successful attempt to save his life.

—Even these poignant stories paled in comparison to the outrageous infant mortality rates, lower life expectancy and higher suicide rates that Native groups described in their communities.

Changes are needed

The task force saw many creative community initiatives. Their lessons will be summarized in a report that will be published in the fall of 1988 after the task force has toured the northwest.

The need for some major changes has already emerged. The problem of attracting and retaining medical professionals will only be solved when these practitioners are trained in the North.

Many, including Bob Rosehart, the president of Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, argued for the creation of a medical school in northern Ontario.

The problem of the sparse population spread over large distances will only be solved by developing

more community-based delivery of services. This also requires the training of more paramedical personnel.

Health care services to Native People must be delivered whenever possible by Natives and where this is not possible, in a culturally appropriate manner.

Francophone and ethnic communities are also demanding culturally appropriate delivery of service.

And last, but absolutely not least, caregivers like ambulance drivers, mental health counsellors and homecare workers must be paid an adequate wage instead of the present pittance. The service they provide saves the institutional side of healthcare millions of dollars.

per,

Gilles Pouliot, MPP Lake Nipigon,
Howie Hampton, MPP Rainy River,
Shelly Martel, MPP Sudbury East

Krystia's Yard Sale

Rosspport, Ontario
Saturday June 25th
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Furniture, dishes, bedding,
antiques, good junk,
Something for
everyone.



Get the butter!: Bob Williams of Terrace Bay admires this 20-pound Lake Trout he caught by Hydro Bay on June 10. Bob, who fishes often, said he caught a total of 37 pounds of fish that day, and he planned to have this one smoked. photo by Greg Huneault

Retirement

Metropolitan Life wishes to announce the retirement of long term Sales Representative, Bill Kirkpatrick.

Bill has served his clients faithfully for 23 years in this community. Bill has now decided to make his residence Penticton, B. C., and will be leaving in early July.

J. Larry McCoy, C.L.U. will be servicing Metropolitan Policyholders in this area.



Metropolitan Life
AND AFFILIATED COMPANIES

Easter Seal Society served thousands in '87

Dear Editor,

The 1987 Easter Seal Society in Ontario's annual report shows that close to \$7,264,991 was spent serving 7,266 children between the ages of 0-19 who have physical disabilities.

The money was used to provide direct counselling services to families of children with physical disabilities; summer camping and recreation programs; medical consultation, prevention and clinic; pre-school programs; transportation and equipment; and parent support services.

The Society received \$10,156,511 in voluntary dollars towards its \$13,208,158 operating budget for 1987. The balance was received through grants and other

Fifty-five per cent of the budget went directly to services for the children on the Society's caseload. The Society allocated \$782,954 (6 per cent) to the Easter Seal Blissymbolics Communications Institute and Easter Seal Research Institute. The remaining \$4,579,723 (34.67 per cent) went toward administration, public information services, and fundraising support.

During the past five years, the number of children has steadily increased and the level of disability and degree of dependence has also grown.

The caseload is comprised largely of children with cerebral palsy, spina bifida and multiple conditions. More than 60 per cent of the children use wheelchairs and are partly to totally dependent.

see "Demand" on page 7

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