

Terrace Bay - Schreiber

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NEWS

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Doctors keep coming and going

Problems at McCausland?

By Dave Chmara

A petition with the names of 657 local residents was presented to the Terrace Bay council expressing concern over the high turnover of doctors in Terrace Bay.

The petition was presented by Mary Cashmore and Sam Harris who went on to say they were not trying to cause an uproar, but were concerned as to why doctors are not staying in Terrace Bay for any length of time.

"We have to promote Terrace Bay as a place to stay and make them (doctors) feel welcome," said Cashmore.

She said during a meeting with McCausland Hospital administrator Clem Fewer, "he gave the impression no one in the community cares if a doctor is full-time or temporary."

Following the presentation by Cashmore and Harris, Mrs. Fowler addressed council to give council the Fowler's view of the situation and also suggested means by which doctors could be more readily welcomed by the community.

First she stated, "we regret the fact that we're leaving Terrace Bay."

She added, "we did not come as temporary people. You don't uproot your family" and take out a \$12,000 loan to move to a town on a temporary basis.

Dr. Fowler's practice at McCausland finished at the end of February. Mrs. Fowler said upon first arriving in Terrace Bay, residents placed a lot of pressure on Dr. Fowler by constantly asking, "how long, or if you're going to stay."

She said when another doctor

does come to set up a practice in town, residents should instead welcome him to town.

Dr. Fowler was initially being paid by the Ministry of Health's Underserviced Areas Program (USAP).

Mike Moore, a former member on the McCausland Hospital's Board, explained that this program is not meant to attract, or retain a full-time doctor. It is used to ensure a town will have a doctor but does not guarantee how long a doctor will stay to practice.

After a few months Dr. Fowler found it would be unfeasible to go into practice on a fee for service basis, and his pay under the USAP was extended until the end of February.

In early February Dr. Fowler attempted to get a loan to establish

a fee for service practice.

Setting up such a practice is very expensive as equipment, staff, and a billing system must be obtained. Mrs. Fowler said future patients can't be used as collateral and subsequently was unable to receive a loan.

She said because no loan was available to set up a practice which would have enabled Dr. Fowler to stay longer, they were forced to make the decision to move.

Some reasons were given as to why it was so difficult to establish a fee for service practice in town. Mrs. Fowler explained that a resident doctor working out of the hospital could be a drain on another doctor's practice. She also said there is a possible lack of community confidence since doctors have been leaving so often.

Although Dr. Fowler's practice was slowly growing, she estimated it would take, "a full 12 months to build a practice financially rewarding enough (for a doctor) to stay."

She suggested the USAP needs to be fully investigated to determine all the advantages the program has to offer.

As well, the community too should know what it has to offer and then a doctor can know what to expect should he decide to set up a practice in town. "The positive cooperation of the community is needed," said Mrs. Fowler.

She further suggested that a committee of the town council, the hospital board and other community leaders be formed to investigate the current problems with attracting and retaining doctors, and to assist new doctors when they arrive in Terrace Bay. The ultimate goal of such a committee being to find a permanent doctor for the community.

Mrs. Fowler also said the Terrace Bay council should look into how it can play a key role in attracting a doctor to town.

Dr. Fowler is leaving town to set up a practice in Chapleau, and the town is supporting him for his first three months by providing a large house, car, an office with staff and a billing system.

Donna Mikeluk, Schreiber Council representative on the McCausland Hospital Board, in a presentation to Schreiber council, noted some conditions related to the medical staff, and the relationship between the medical staff and the Hospital Administration were far from ideal.

Minutes from the council meeting read, "This observation tends to be supported by the large number of doctors practicing for relatively short terms in Terrace Bay...current facilities available to a doctor commencing practice in Terrace Bay at the Hospital Clinic are not conducive to encouraging a physician to locate in the area on a permanent basis."

Further allegations were made during the Terrace Bay council meeting concerning the situation at McCausland, but as yet have not been confirmed or substantiated.



Tuesday, February 21 was Thinking Day - a day to mark the birthday of Robert Baden Powell, the founder of Scouting in 1907. The Schreiber Beavers marked the day by hosting a Carnival Night. The boys made a number of games and invited the Brownies as well because it was Girl Guide/Scouting Week. Above, a brownie tosses a ball in a game of "Knock off Dummy".

Photo by Dave Chmara



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