

David Tilson MP ? Strengthening health care in rural communities



Canadians can understand how a country as vast and sparsely populated as ours presents unique challenges when it comes to providing quality health care services in close proximity to every citizen.

For many, it can be quite difficult to find a family doctor.

On the other hand, the financial costs of medical schooling are discouraging for many aspiring doctors and nurses. The fact is Canada needs more doctors and nurses.

Our government announced a new initiative as part of our Economic Action Plan to address these concerns. Our plan is not only to help strengthen primary healthcare services in rural communities, but also to help alleviate the high cost of education and training. This action is to embrace partial Canada Student Loan forgiveness for family doctors, nurse practitioners and nurses who work in underserved rural or remote communities.

More specifically, family doctors and residents in family medicine who begin working in a designated community will be eligible for loan forgiveness of up to \$8,000 per year (to a maximum of \$40,000). Under similar stipulations, nurse practitioners and nurses will be eligible for forgiveness of up to \$4,000 per year (to a maximum of \$20,000). The loan forgiveness applicant must have been employed (full-time, part-time or casual) for at least 12 months, and must have provided in-person services for a minimum of 400 hours (or 50 days) in that community. Eligible communities include most of those with a population of 50,000 or less, including communities that provide health services to First Nations, Inuit and Métis populations. These benefits are now available to applicants.

Encouraging more doctors and nurses to work in the rural communities that need them most is just the latest way our government is taking action for the health of Canadians and their families. This builds on our previous action of increasing provincial health care transfers to record levels. We are increasing funding by six per cent per year over the next three years, ensuring that support for our health care system is balanced and sustainable. This is reliable action that will help preserve health care in Canada over the long-term.

Our government has been clear ? Canadians deserve the very best with respect to accessible and quality health care. By partially forgiving loans for our hard-working doctors and nurses in Canada, we're taking action to strengthen the health care system and improve the health of all Canadians.