

OPINION

Medical school the next step towards curing doctor shortage

Three years ago (when first given the honour of representing you in Ottawa), the prime minister asked me what my strongest interests might be regarding parliamentary committees. My immediate response was to serve the government on the standing committee on health care.

From a national perspective, our government is committed to improving the planning and co-ordination of health-care professionals and continues to work with Health Canada, the provinces and territories, and a wide range of health services. We have increased health-care funding every year to the provinces by six per cent, have set up a \$250 million national cancer strategy, and I have been doing my best to promote the need for more money for health research.

From a community perspective, you are no doubt aware of the disturbing shortage of physicians in Barrie. As a



**PATRICK
BROWN**

member of the Barrie and Area Physician Recruitment Committee, I have been actively involved in the effort to attract family doctors to our communi-

ty since 2004. Each year, I have joined the tour of medical schools, speaking to students and making them aware of Barrie's many attractions.

The task force has successfully recruited 129 family doctors since 2001. I have continuously supported the recruitment effort by all avenues open to me, including creating a scholarship fund to entice medical students and interns to our city.

What great joy it brings me today to pledge my full support for the development of the Family Medicine Residency Program affiliation between Royal Victoria Hospital and the University of Toronto's Faculty of Medicine. For a community where approximately 30,000 people are without a family physician, RVH becoming a teaching hospital for medical residents feels like a timely third-period goal.

The Family Medicine Residency Program is to be run by a faculty of local doctors led by Dr. Stuart Murdoch,

chief of family medicine at Royal Victoria Hospital, and is a program where medical residents will spend two years working closely with RVH specialists, while receiving hands-on, real-life experience in a family medicine clinic.

The program will have four residents begin their practices in June, and this number is expected to grow to 18 residents within four years. I understand each student will have their own caseload of 300 patients — many of whom are without a family physician.

I have been very excited about the possibility of a teaching partnership with U of T since Dr. Rob Ballagh first mentioned it to me in 2006. According to Dr. Murdoch, statistics show that up to half of all medical residents stay in the communities where they receive their training.

He also points out that this exciting partnership with the U of T also means the hospital will have access to

university resources and research opportunities, and will ensure physicians and hospital staff remain up-to-date with technology and knowledge.

The Family Medicine Residency Program will be housed in a temporary location beginning in July, but will be located on hospital property once the Phase 1 expansion project opens in 2011 or 2012. The outfitting of this facility will need to be raised through community fundraising, and I am keen to participate in this endeavour.

The Barrie Chamber of Commerce is hosting a fundraiser for the MD residency faculty on Friday, April 3, with dinner, live entertainment and much more. To make a donation, or to arrange for tickets, contact Julie Willard at 721-5000, or call my office at 726-5959.

Patrick Brown is the member of Parliament for Barrie