



For Immediate Release

Northern Rural Care: What are my options?

May 14, 2020 – Access to health care in rural communities is a known challenge. Northern Policy Institute's newest commentary outlines the primary care landscape in Northern Ontario and Ontario, as well as two different potential models of care delivery: Patient Medical Home and Rural Health Hub.

The commentary *Integration of Care in Northern Ontario: Patient Medical Homes, Rural Health Hubs and Evolving Ontario Health Teams*, was written by authors Dr. Sarah-Lynn Newbery, Chief of Staff at the North of Superior Health Care Group, and Josée Malette, 4th-year medical student at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. This piece is slated to be published in the Canadian Journal of Rural Medicine, as well.

Something to consider:

Patient Medical Home: This concept focuses more on who will provide care and how that care will be provided and coordinated within the primary care sector.

Rural Health Hub: This focuses on how those services will be governed, funded and organized in a local context and across the sectors that exist locally.

The authors state there is an urgent need for better population-based planning and care delivery organized around meeting the needs of a whole population. "Primary care is the entry point to the health care system for many patients in Ontario." Said Newbery. "Currently, approximately **13,500 family physicians and 3,080 Nurse Practitioners** in Ontario are responsible for the primary **care of over 14 million Ontarians.**"

In 2015, **the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care** released a report entitled "Patient Care Groups: A new model of population-based primary health care for Ontario" which laid out a population-based frame for care delivery. Key features of this concept support various principles that make up the PMH and RHH models, but a Patient Care Groups concept **considers population clusters that are much larger than the typical rural Northern Ontario setting.**

The commentary finds that both concepts of the Patient Medical Home and the Rural Health Hub are mutually supporting concepts in the rural environment. The latter model may provide the necessary support to enable efficient and better-coordinated delivery of comprehensive, local population-based models, and patient centred care that is inclusive of the patient medical home concept in rural primary care settings.

To read *Integration of Care in Northern Ontario: Patient Medical Homes, Rural Health Hubs and Evolving Ontario Health Teams*, follow the link:

<https://www.northernpolicy.ca/integration-of-care>

-30-



Media Interviews: Author Sarah-Lynn Newbery and Josée Malette (en Français) and NPI Research Manager Rachel Rizzuto are available for comment. To arrange an interview, please contact:

Christine St-Pierre
Communications Coordinator
226-344-3213
cstpierre@northernpolicy.ca

About Northern Policy Institute:

Northern Policy Institute is Northern Ontario's independent think tank. We perform research, collect and disseminate evidence, and identify policy opportunities to support the growth of sustainable Northern communities. Our operations are located in Thunder Bay and Sudbury. We seek to enhance Northern Ontario's capacity to take the lead position on socio-economic policy that impacts Northern Ontario, Ontario, and Canada as a whole.

About the authors:

Dr. Sarah-Lynn Newbery

Dr. Sarah-Lynn Newbery, completed medical school at McMaster and postgraduate family medicine training in Thunder Bay in the Northern Ontario Medical Program. A fellow of both the CFPC and the SRPC, she has been a rural physician in comprehensive community practice in Marathon since 1996 and she is currently the Chief of Staff of the North of Superior Health Care Group. She has been on the board of the Ontario College of Family Physicians since 2008 and is a past President of the OCFP. She has been the VP Clinical for the Northwest LHIN and is chair of the Northern Physician Resources Task Force. She is on several provincial health related committees and is chair of the OCFP's Rural Mentoring Network and Leadership in Primary Care Mentoring Network. She has been an active community teacher and faculty member at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine since its inception and is currently the Assistant Dean of Physician Workforce Strategy.

She believes strongly in equitable access to care for citizens of Canada's rural communities and loves the professional work of being a comprehensive family physician in rural practice.

Josée Malette

Josée Malette is a current 4th-year medical student at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine who was born and raised in Thunder Bay. She holds a B.A.Sc. in Chemical Engineering and an Honours B.Sc. in Biochemistry from the University of Ottawa. Lover of the outdoors, she enjoys fishing, canoeing, hiking and spending time with family.

She is currently the Chair of the provincial student-led Northern Ontario and Rural Medicine Committee. Apart from northern, rural and remote medicine, her interests in the field revolved around access to French-language services, critical care, acute care and wilderness medicine. She is delighted to be pursuing a career as an Emergency Medicine resident starting July 1, 2020. She looks forward to providing care to patients in her hometown and the rest of Northwestern Ontario in the future.