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**PROVINCE INVESTS MORE THAN \$2.1 MILLION IN PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT,
RETENTION INITIATIVES****Innovative Recruitment Strategies See Results, Receive Additional Funding
To Enhance Recruitment to Rural, Northern Manitoba: Oswald**

DAUPHIN—The province is investing more than \$2.1 million in Manitoba's innovative, multi-tiered strategy to recruit and retain physicians across Manitoba, especially in rural areas, Health Minister Theresa Oswald announced here today.

"We have worked with the regions to recruit more physicians to Manitoba communities and, since 1999, we have increased the number of physicians in Manitoba by more than 345," said Oswald. "Manitoba has a strong record of innovative physician recruitment and retention programs, resulting in a 19 per cent increase in practising physicians in rural Manitoba. These investments will help us continue to increase the number of doctors in the province, particularly in rural areas."

The new and ongoing investments include:

- \$500,000 in rural physician relief funding to support physician coverage in situations when a rural physician leaves a community for a short period of time, such as taking additional medical training;
- \$600,000 to support the recruitment of specialists, who are provided up to \$15,000 to relocate to Manitoba in return for one year of service;
- \$500,000 for a physician resettlement fund to create more incentives for doctors to practise in rural Manitoba by helping doctors with moving and other expenses;
- \$500,000 to support grants of \$50,000 for 10 second-year students taking part in the Northern Remote Physician Practice Initiative, a family medicine streamed-residency program to encourage more doctors to practise in northern Manitoba; and
- co-ordinating the sharing of information between rural communities, municipal leaders and regions on best practices to support their roles in recruitment and retention of physicians.

In addition, \$90,000 in funding will be used to co-ordinate the repatriation of Manitoban and Canadian medical students studying in other provinces or abroad.

"Some Canadians, including Manitobans, travel abroad for their medical training, and we want them to consider Manitoba as the place to practise," said Dr. Dean Sandham, dean of the University of Manitoba's faculty of medicine. "Approaching these students directly will encourage them to move to Manitoba to continue their careers in medicine."

The faculty of medicine has also enhanced opportunities for rural students including developing a multi-faceted index used in the admissions process, which puts a high value on students who are likely to choose to practise in rural areas.

This year, 49 students with a rural background will be part of the incoming class of 110 students at the University of Manitoba's faculty of medicine.

The minister noted the investments build on \$370,000 in funding to increase Medical Student/Resident Financial Assistance Program grants for third- and fourth-year physician students. Each physician is eligible for one grant per year for up to four years. Recipients return one year of service in Manitoba for each grant.

The province's physician recruitment and retention strategy has been further developed using stakeholder feedback from the last year including feedback from the University of Manitoba's faculty of medicine, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba, the regional health authorities and the Association of Manitoba Municipalities. The strategy has three important goals including:

- improving flexibility in the health-care system to meet short-, medium- and long-term needs for physicians;
- bringing home Canadian/Manitoba graduates; and
- continuing to improve the processes for the licensure of international medical graduates.

In 2007, we made a commitment to have 100 more doctors working in Manitoba by 2011 and we've already surpassed that number, said Oswald. We will continue to make innovative investments to support doctors and encourage even more physicians to set up practice in Manitoba.

Today's announcements build on other investments in physician training, recruitment and retention including:

- Introducing a 60 per cent tuition rebate worth up to \$25,000 for graduates who choose to live and work in Manitoba.
- Providing up to \$25,000 in assistance per year for four years for family medicine physicians who have set up practice in rural Manitoba with a total of \$175,000 invested to date.
- Providing grants of \$50,000 in return for service for family doctors to return to school to undertake a third year in an advanced skill area such as emergency medicine or anaesthesiology, with a total of \$150,000 invested to date.
- Expanding medical school spaces to 110 from 70, resulting in the largest first-year medical class in 30 years.
- Introducing the Medical Licensure Program for International Medical Graduates in 2001 to assist foreign doctors in receiving conditional registration. The program started with 10 spaces in 2006. The province increased spaces to 25 and is working towards expanding the number of seats to 35.