



NEWS RELEASE

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LARRY McCORMICK, MP
HASTINGS-FRONTENAC-LENOX & ADDINGTON

Toward Development of a National Rural Health Strategy

Ottawa — Today, the National Liberal Rural Caucus presented Health Minister Allan Rock with a plan that ensures rural Canadians have their say in the development of a national rural health strategy.

Larry McCormick (M.P., Hastings, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington), the chairman of National Liberal Rural Caucus, presented Minister Rock with the report *Toward Development of a National Rural Health Strategy, Phase I*. He said, "Rural Caucus believes Canada needs a co-ordinated and sustained focus on rural health. This blueprint will help us achieve the goal."

Accepting the report, Health Minister Allan Rock stated, "This report is full of excellent ideas that I have no hesitation endorsing. They build on what we learned through the National Forum on Health and from the Rural Dialogue of the Canadian Rural Partnership, and they challenge us to address rural Canadians' concerns about their health and about their access to health services."

The report recommends that consultations occur over the summer months in ridings across Canada, making the process accessible to Canadians across our country. "This consultation will assist me in the development and implementation of innovations for rural and community health, an opportunity provided for in the 1999 federal budget," said Mr. Rock.

The 1999 federal budget provided \$11.5 billion to health care, including \$30 million over the next three years to continue developing strategies for rural and community health with the provinces. In February 1998, Cabinet endorsed the rural impact test to measure the impact of all government initiatives on rural residents. "We want the 'rural lens' applied to all of Health Canada's policies, program, and services," Mr. McCormick said.

Responsibility for ensuring that the rural health perspective is considered in the department's policies, programs and services falls within the mandate of Canada's first Executive Director of Rural Health, Dr. John Wootton. His office will develop the workbook recommended in the report, making it available to MPs and on Health Canada's website to Canadians. Dr. Wootton underlined the importance of the report and of the support of the National Liberal Rural Caucus. He said, "This is an opportunity to build an informed, collaborative, and inclusive process to address the health and access issues which rural Canadians have identified. The Office of Rural Health is committed to work closely with Provinces, communities and individuals, to explore approaches that support our shared goal of improved health for rural Canadians."

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For further information:

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