

709NEWS

Tel: 709-576-6397 OR 1-888-709-6397

Fax: 709-753-7340

Product Summary:

SHORTAGE OF PHARMACISTS: Yesterday on the Morning Show we heard about a shortage of pharmacists in this province.

Thursday, June 15, 2006 07:45AM Item # 07

CBC Gander

SHORTAGE OF PHARMACISTS: Yesterday on the Morning Show we heard about a shortage of pharmacists in this province.

Thursday, June 15, 2006 07:45AM Item # 07

CBC Gander

RANDY LARCOMBE: Yesterday here on the Morning Show we heard about a shortage of pharmacists in this province. Sharon King of the Association of Allied Health Professionals told us the problem is particularly serious in central and eastern regions. Now to talk more about this we're joined this morning by Tom Osborne, the Minister of Health and Community Services. Good morning Mr. Osborne.

TOM OSBORNE: Good morning, how are you?

RANDY LARCOMBE: I'm wonderful, thanks so much for joining us.

TOM OSBORNE: Oh, you're kindly welcome.

RANDY LARCOMBE: So what's your response, first of all, to these concerns about the shortage of pharmacists?

TOM OSBORNE: Well government are certainly aware and we're also very concerned with the high number of vacant pharmacist positions in government and hospital facilities, which can ultimately result on an impact in services I guess. So we are developing innovative initiatives to allow hospital pharmacists to devote more time to clinical roles as a priority.

RANDY LARCOMBE: What does that mean, clinical roles?

TOM OSBORNE: Well, I guess pharmacists would like to be able to spend more time doing clinical pharmacy work as opposed to, and government are providing

legislation or drafting legislation to lay the ground work for new staffing models that will allow for pharmacists to do more clinical work in the dispensing of drugs in hospitals, which will allow us to have a better ability to recruit and retain pharmacists in our hospitals.

RANDY LARCOMBE:I'm still not sure if I understand what you mean by clinical work. I guess my knowledge of what happens within hospitals with pharmacists is limited.

TOM OSBORNE:No problem. Well, I guess, we're looking at initiatives to free hospital pharmacists from dispensing duties, which hospital pharmacists feel are important tools that will allow them to do more clinical pharmacy roles. I'm not sure if that helps or not.

RANDY LARCOMBE:I'm not sure if it does either to be honest with you Mr. Osborne. They want to be free of these clinical duties is that what you're saying?

TOM OSBORNE:They want to do more clinical duties.

RANDY LARCOMBE:They want to do more clinical duties rather than doing what?

TOM OSBORNE:Rather than hospital dispensing.

RANDY LARCOMBE:Okay and when we talk about clinical duties we mean what there?

TOM OSBORNE:Well I guess the hospital clinics as opposed to having pharmacists take orders from hospital floors for example.

RANDY LARCOMBE:Oh, ok, alright. So you agree then that there is a shortage of pharmacists then do you?

TOM OSBORNE:Yes, we understand that there is a shortage of pharmacists. We understand what some of the issues are. In fact there was a presentation, the senior officials within the department from the Public Service Secretariat and as well as the Public Service Secretariat rather by Health Authority executive. There is a synthesis paper with recommendations to address the problem that is being coordinated in consultation with stakeholders as well and we are looking at the issues. We understand that the issues, as example, the opportunities for practicing clinical pharmacy, compensation packages, are some of the core elements that pharmacists are looking at as far as recruitment and retention within the hospital systems here in the province.

RANDY LARCOMBE:Yeah.

TOM OSBORNE:And government is certainly looking and will concentrate on addressing these issues in the coming weeks.

RANDY LARCOMBE:In the coming weeks? That soon?

TOM OSBORNE:Yes, oh yes. Like I say, as early as June 9th government had meetings with the health executive, the Health Authority executive. So we were aware of the issue and we are already laying the ground work to try and deal with the issue.

RANDY LARCOMBE:Oh, okay. What does government do to try and entice soon to graduate pharmacists to stay in the province? And the reason I ask you this is that I know that being a pharmacist is a wonderful thing, a lot of people are clamoring after your services. And I know that when people get into the pharmacists program in MUN, after they're finished about their first year, maybe their second year I mean they're getting calls from everywhere, people wanting them to come to work with them. What does government do?

TOM OSBORNE:Well it does create challenges, there's no question about it. And I know in your interview with Sharon King yesterday, I mean this is a problem, not just in this province, but all across Canada. There is a drain to the United States in some regards, there is bidding competitions and I believe, as Sharon put it yesterday, some of the salaries and some of the incentives that are being offered are unbelievable and it's all across Canada. So, it is difficult to compete with that, how do you compete with that? That's something that we're looking at. Some of the suggestions that Sharon made yesterday were obviously salary, which is something we're looking at, bursaries or a return to service for the actual seat in the School of Pharmacy and she also mentioned about looking to graduate more pharmacy students from our School of Pharmacy.

RANDY LARCOMBE:Right yeah. It is a tough going to keep them here. I know doctors say listen, quality of life is one thing that really has to come to the forefront here. Salary, sure everybody cares about that, but as quality of life, is that what you can offer pharmacists?

TOM OSBORNE:Well I guess a way to improve quality of life within the work setting would be to reduce the level of stress that is currently being experienced by some of the pharmacists within our hospital setting now because they're carrying an extra load where there is a shortage in some of the hospitals. That is one of the ways to improve the quality of life. The quality of life in Newfoundland and Labrador, as far as our natural heritage, what you have around you, the quality of life as far as a safe society is something that is already there and most of the students who graduate from our School of Pharmacy are aware of what we have to

offer in this province. Maybe it should be highlighted what we're offering, competing with what other provinces are offering as far as a way of life.

RANDY LARCOMBE:Mr. Osborne I want to thank you so much sir for taking the time to chat with me, I do appreciate it.

TOM OSBORNE:Oh you're most welcome.

RANDY LARCOMBE:All right, bye-bye.

TOM OSBORNE:Bye-bye.

RANDY LARCOMBE:That's Tom Osborne, he's the Minister of Health and Community Services.