News Release – for immediate distribution

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Doug Blackie and Ed Marquis to lead initiative to review the Rural Retention Program

VANCOUVER – Mr. Doug Blackie and Dr. Edward Marquis will be co-leading RCCbc’s review of the Rural Retention Program (RRP), including an assessment of the community points system used to allocate medical benefits and funding to BC’s rural physicians and rural communities. They will begin working on this project on August 8, 2018. The initiative is anticipated to take two and half years to complete.

In November 2017, the Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues (JSC) – a joint collaboration between the BC government and the Doctors of BC – decided to freeze the isolation points ratings of BC’s Rural Subsidiary Agreement (RSA) communities to facilitate a comprehensive review of the Rural Retention Program. The Rural Coordination Centre of BC (RCCbc) was tasked with designing and implementing the review, and will be examining how effectively the current system is meeting both healthcare system requirements as well as physician expectations. Impacts of the RRP on recruitment and retention will also be examined.

Blackie, formerly Director, Physician Workforce Development with the BC Ministry of Health, and Marquis, a full-service family physician practicing in Prince George, were selected by RCCbc to lead the review. Blackie has extensive experience supporting and sustaining rural health services at the community, regional and the provincial level including seven years serving on the JSC, while Marquis has served as a Doctors of BC representative at the JSC table for the past 13 years and currently chairs the Doctors of BC Rural Issues Committee. Both are familiar with the Rural Retention Program and the current community points system, and are well positioned to connect with the numerous stakeholders – rural and regional physicians, rural communities, the Ministry of Health, Doctors of BC, and health authorities – to complete this extensive review.

Blackie and Marquis are tasked with evaluating the current capacity of the RRP to meet policy expectations, Ministry of Health policy directions, and physician requirements. Working in collaboration with RCCbc staff, Blackie and Marquis will make recommendations, identify resource implications, and suggest change management strategies to improve the RRP for the benefit of all.

The Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues (JSC) is a joint collaboration between the BC Government and the Doctors of BC that provides policy oversight as well as funding for rural physician programs.

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QUOTES

Mr. Doug Blackie, Co-Lead, Rural Retention Program Review
“I’m pleased to be working with the RCCbc team, our partners at the Ministry of Health and Doctors of BC, and especially rural BC physicians to look at innovative ways to improve the RRP and strengthen its ability to recruit and retain quality doctors in rural and remote communities.”

Dr. Ed Marquis, Co-Lead, Rural Retention Program Review
“It is exciting to be involved with the review of the RRP which has been/is a cornerstone of BC’s rural physician benefit package since the inception of the JSC in 2000. Having been privileged to be part of both a ‘coal face’utilizer and high level developer of this program over time, I am thankful for the powerful and constructive stakeholder dialogue that allows our rural programs to evolve. This consultative process is paramount to a successful RRP review and will align this program with the evolution of interprofessional team-based care for our rural citizens.”

Dr. Ray Markham, Executive Director
“We’re very pleased to have Doug Blackie and Ed Marquis join the RCCbc team for this critical project. This review will clarify how the JSC and RCCbc can jointly strengthen recruitment and retention of physicians to BC’s rural communities which will benefit rural citizens throughout the province.”

BACKGROUND

The Rural Retention Program
This program is part of a suite of physician recruitment and retention incentives funded through the Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues (JSC). The policy objective of RRP is to enhance the supply and stability of physicians in rural communities throughout BC.

Rural Coordination Centre of BC
The Rural Coordination Centre of BC (RCCbc) works to enhance rural education in British Columbia and advocates to improve the health of rural BC residents.

Working at the direction of the JSC, and in collaboration BC’s health authorities, post-secondary institutions, practitioners, and rural communities, RCCbc identifies gaps and overlaps in rural services throughout the province and creates initiatives to address shortfalls. It works to increase and sustain recruitment and retention of rural healthcare professionals to BC and to provide high quality, inter-community healthcare to rural British Columbians.

Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues
The Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues (JSC) is a BC-based entity that includes representation from the Doctors of BC, the Ministry of Health, and health authorities. The JSC advises the BC Government and the Doctors of BC on matters pertaining to rural medical practice and develops programs and policies for BC’s rural physicians.