

New Brunswick Shows That Sensible Health Reform is Possible

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While Ralph Klein lies about health care costs, and uses them as excuses for regressive tax and service withdrawal, New Brunswick's Premier Bernard Lord announced that he is implementing changes that will actually improve health care.

Lord announced yesterday that he will establish community health centers, license nurse practitioners, publish an annual health-care report card, and appoint a patients' advocate.

"Primary care reform is a key to improving health care in Canada," said MRG spokesperson Dr. Yves Talbot. "Community health centers where different health professionals including doctors, nurses, social workers, and physiotherapists work together, is a better way of delivering primary health care. Health policy experts have been saying that for years, and it's encouraging to see a government finally taking note."

"Many randomized trials, studies that produce the highest quality evidence, have shown the nurse practitioners can conduct many of tasks traditionally carried out by physicians, and in certain cases do a better job," Talbot continued. "Nurse practitioners are the ideal way to deal with the doctor shortage."

"Quality control has been terribly neglected in the health care system" added another MRG spokesperson, Dr. PJ Devereaux. "There are dangers in misleading information from report cards," warned Devereaux. "But if they are done well, focusing on the length of waits, patient satisfaction, and whether patients are getting therapies that randomized trials have shown improve patient outcomes, they can be very useful."

Devereaux also expressed MRG support for a patient advocate. "Patient voices get lost in the debate," Devereaux stated. "The public has said over and over that they would prefer high quality health care to tax cuts, but governments haven't listened. Patients want changes like those Premier Lord will implement, not private hospitals that actually increase costs and result in poorer, not better, care."