

Northern Ontario's Obstetrical Services in 2020: A Developing Rural Maternity Care Desert

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Disclosures

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Maternity Care in Rural Canada

- **Why is this topic important?**
 - Increasing rates of maternity program closures
 - Reduction of FPs providing obstetrical care
 - 1983: 68%
 - 2010: 10%
 - Impact on parturient women & their children



Our Study

- Follow up to **Hutten-Czapski (1999)**
- Assess L&D services in Northern Ontario – Then vs. Now
- 40 communities surveyed, including:
 - 40 hospitals (35 rural, 5 urban)
 - Rural: population <30,000
 - 16 midwifery practices



Results

- 1) **Obstetric Services**
- 2) **Travel Times**
- 3) **Physician Workforce**
- 4) **Midwifery Services**



Results

1) Obstetric Services

- Communities not offering obstetrics
 - 1999: 37.5% (15/40)
 - 2020: 60% (24/40)
 - 100% from rural communities
 - 69% (**24/35**) of Northern Ontario rural communities with hospitals no longer provide OB care
- Communities offering obstetrics with no C/S
 - 17.5% (7) → 7.5% (3) (**↓57%**)
- Communities offering obstetrics with C/S (general surgeons)
 - 17.5% (7) → 5.0% (2) (**↓71%**)
- No new communities offering obstetrical care since 1999



Results

2) Travel Times

- Average travel time to access obstetrics
 - 1999: 19 minutes
 - 2020: 41 minutes
- Average travel time to access C/S
 - 1999: 49 minutes
 - 2020: 61 minutes
 - Communities that continue to offer obstetrics, but stopped offering C/S: **2.5 hours**
- Communities with obstetrics in 1999, but no longer in 2020
 - Average time to access obstetrics care: **98 minutes**
 - Average time to access C/S: **128 minutes**



Results

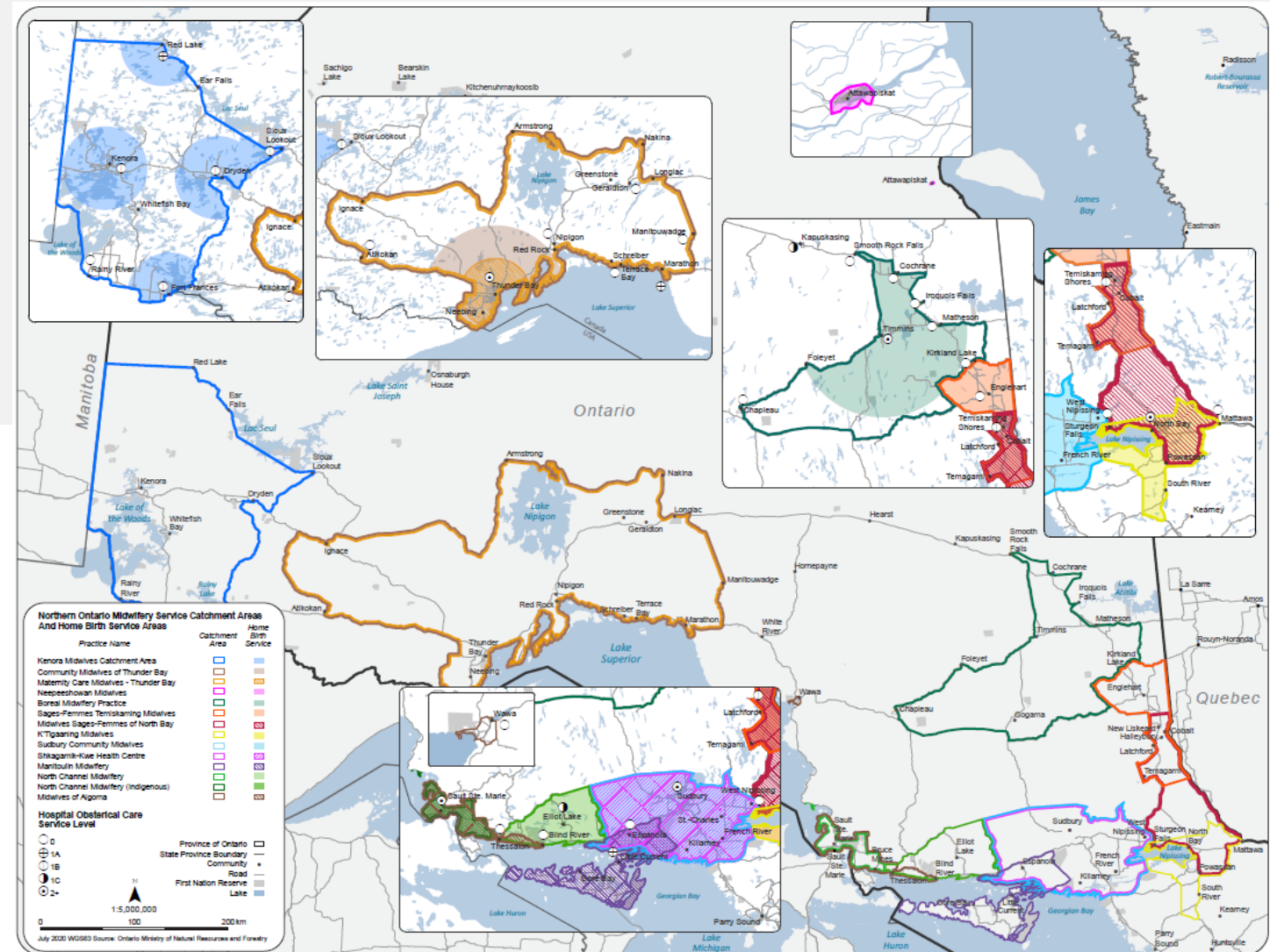
3) Physician Workforce

- GPs offering obstetrical services
 - Urban: 6.8 → 2.4 (↓65%)
 - Rural: 7.45 → 3.82 (↓49%)
- These changes have occurred without significant change in physician numbers from 1999 to 2020

Results

4) Midwifery Services

- Midwives in Northern Ontario
 - 50 (16 practices)
- Average travel time for home births
 - 50 minutes





Summary

➤ Current State of Obstetrics in Northern Ontario

- Less rural communities offer obstetrics
- Longer travel times to access obstetrical services
- Fewer FPs offer obstetric care, but # of FPs per community remains similar

➤ A Developing Maternity Care Desert

- *In the last 21 years:*
 - Average travel time to access obstetrics doubled
 - Travel time to access c-section increased to over an hour
 - Communities with local obstetrics only in 1999 now travel 1.5h (obstetrics); 2h (c-section)
- *Midwifery*
 - Present dominant practice model not effective in reversing the maternity care desert of Northern Ontario



What's Next?

- Advocacy and leadership in Education
- Advocacy and leadership in Government
- Leadership in Advocacy



Questions?