

NATIONAL OFFICER REPORT

Linda Lam

National Officer of Political Action

September 2019 – Annual General Meeting – St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador



I. DESCRIPTION OF POSITION

The National Officer of Political Action (NOPA) is mandated to lead the development of the National Day of Action supporting documents and assist the Director of Government Affairs in supporting political advocacy that CFMS and its members undertake each year. The NOPA chairs the CFMS Day of Action Topic Selection Committee and the CFMS Day of Action Research Committee.

II. ACTIVITIES

Day of Action Topic Selection Committee Chair

2018-2019 was the inaugural year of a formal CFMS Day of Action Topic Selection Committee. It was composed of 8 medical students, representing 5 medical schools, that was tasked with short listing and drafting a proposal summary document of topics for the Day of Action. Feedback from medical students collected at the CFMS annual general meeting and from select groups of CFMS members including GAACs and Board of Directors was compiled by the Topic Selection Committee, and using the following three criteria:

1. Within the domain of the federal government
2. Current political interest
3. Relevant and interesting to Canadian medical students

A topic was selected for the Day of Action. The Day of Action 2019 topic was seniors care and aging.

Day of Action Research Committee Chair

The 2019 Day of Action Research Committee was composed of 15 medical students, representing 8 medical schools, that researched, consulted, summarized, developed asks and wrote the essential documents to support the topic chosen for the Day of Action. Day of Action Research Committee members were also responsible for training Day of Action delegates in Ottawa in preparation for meetings with federal MPs, senators, and policymakers. As a committee we developed a Day of Action backgrounder report summarizing traditional and grey literature research on the Day of Action topic, summary report meant as a hand-out for meetings that summarizes the key points, a community consultations review and summary report that outlined our approach to the community consultation process, analysis, and summarized the key findings from the meetings, and a medical student engagement strategy for the Day of Action. Following the Day of Action, we wrote the Day of Action Follow-up Summary report that documented the activities and lessons learned from the Day of Action.

Following the Day of Action, the NOPA communicated with partners and stakeholders from the Day of Action to develop the CFMS Summer Studentship on Seniors Care and Aging. Through this initiative one medical student was funded by the CFMS to carry out research in collaboration with a CFMS partner on the area of seniors care and aging, to contribute to continual advancement of this field as an effort in longitudinal advocacy.

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In collaboration with Day of Action Research Committee Members, and the Director of Government Affairs, a number of articles were also written, submitted and accepted for publication including the CFMS Annual Review, Scrub-in (Ontario Medical Association), and the National Geriatric Interest Group Annual Publication, for the following titles: Day of Action on Seniors Care and Aging Asks, Stakeholder Perspectives on Seniors Care and Aging, and The Financial Implications of Gendered Caregiving.

Federal Election Strategy Member and Co-Chair Federal Election Primer

With the federal election coming up in fall 2019, the National Officer of Political Action was involved with designing and implementing the CFMS Federal Election Strategy as well as co-chairing the Federal Election Primer Committee with the National Officer of Health Policy. The purpose of these activities is to use the federal election as an opportunity to engage medical students with federal politics as well as provide easily accessible, objective information in regards to the federal election and the major political parties so that medical students can make an informed decision on their vote.

III. MEETINGS ATTENDED

Date	Meeting	Location
Aug 29, 2018	Topic Selection Committee Meeting 1	Teleconference
Sept 11, 2018	Topic Selection Committee Meeting 2	Teleconference
Sept 18, 2018	Topic Selection Committee Meeting 3	Teleconference
Sept 26, 2018	Topic Selection Committee Meeting 4	Teleconference
Oct 14-15, 2018	CMA National Health Policy Conference	Ottawa, Ontario
Oct 20, 2018	CFMS Federal Election Strategy Meeting	Teleconference
Nov 1, 2018	Research Committee Meeting 1	Teleconference
Nov 5-8, 2018	Research Committee Member Onboarding	Phone Call
Nov 10, 2018	With CFMS National Seniors Strategy Taskforce	Phone Call
Nov 11, 2018	GAAC Meeting	Teleconference
Nov 15, 2018	Research Committee Meeting 2	Teleconference
Nov 19, 2018	Meeting with stakeholder	Winnipeg, MB
Nov 20, 2018	Meeting with stakeholder	Winnipeg, MB
Nov 28, 2018	Research Committee Meeting 3	Teleconference
Dec 12, 2018	Research Committee Meeting 4	Teleconference
Dec 13, 2018	CFMS National Officer Orientation	Teleconference
Jan 8, 2019	Consultation Committee Meeting	Teleconference
Jan 11, 2019	Research Committee Meeting 5	Teleconference
Jan 18, 2019	Research Committee Meeting 6	Teleconference
Jan 25, 2019	Research Committee Meeting 7	Teleconference
Feb 2-4, 2019	Day of Action	Ottawa, Ontario
Feb 24, 2019	Day of Action Debrief	Teleconference
March 18, 2019	National Institute on Aging re: CFMS Summer Studentship	Teleconference

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April 6-25, 2019	Day of Action Research Committee Debrief x5	Teleconference
April 27, 2019	CFMS Federal Election Strategy Team Meeting	Teleconference
June 5-12, 2019	NOPA Interviews x3	Teleconference
June 9, 2019	CFMS Federal Election Primer Team Meeting #1	Teleconference
July 17, 2019	CFMS Federal Election Primer Team Meeting #2	Teleconference
Sept 12, 2019	CFMS Federal Election Primer Team Meeting #3	Teleconference

V. CONCLUSIONS

Day of Action Topic Selection Committee

Topic Selection Process slideshow:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/11R5nEM3J2iuvfSKAkal-WtmuejiqXV4SEeCB7QAGntY/edit?usp=sharing>

Following the inaugural year of a formal Topic Selection Committee, my reflections are that this is a positive way to engage medical students with political advocacy. It allows medical students interested in political advocacy, who are not already engaged with the Government Affairs and Advocacy Roundtable an opportunity to explore a number of topics in the context of Canadian politics in a time limited manner. Medical students who are interested can continue onto the Research Committee, while those that are unable to commit have an end date.

Our Process

The Topic Selection Committee was guided by three criteria in evaluating and ultimately selecting the topic for the Day of Action: 1. The proposed topic fits within the domain of the federal government; 2. The proposed topic is of current political interest; and 3. The proposed topic is relevant and interesting to Canadian medical students.

The Topic Selection Committee (TSC) utilized topic ideas proposed by Government Affairs and Advocacy Committee (GAAC) members, and medical students from the CFMS spring general meeting working group. A google form was also open for medical students to propose topic ideas that asked three questions: 1. What topic should we advocate for? 2. As a medical student body, why should we advocate for this? 3. How does this topic fit within the domain of the federal government? The TSC then ranked the topics and shortlisted the first 12. Further research was done to explore the topics including identifying the problem and opportunities for advocacy. With this information, each member of the TSC ranked the 12 topics, and the top 5 topics with the highest average were shortlisted for the Day of Action Topic

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proposal. For each of the 5 topics, background information, why should we advocate for this, and what we could advocate for, were explored and summarized into a Topic Proposal report.

The Topic Proposal report was shared with medical students and a working group at the AGM allowed for medical students to provide feedback on the proposed topics. GAAC members and CFMS executive board members were also consulted for feedback following the AGM. This feedback was collected and shared with the topic selection committee. The final topic selection was decided on by the National Officer of Political Action in collaboration with the CFMS Director of Government Affairs based on the feedback received.

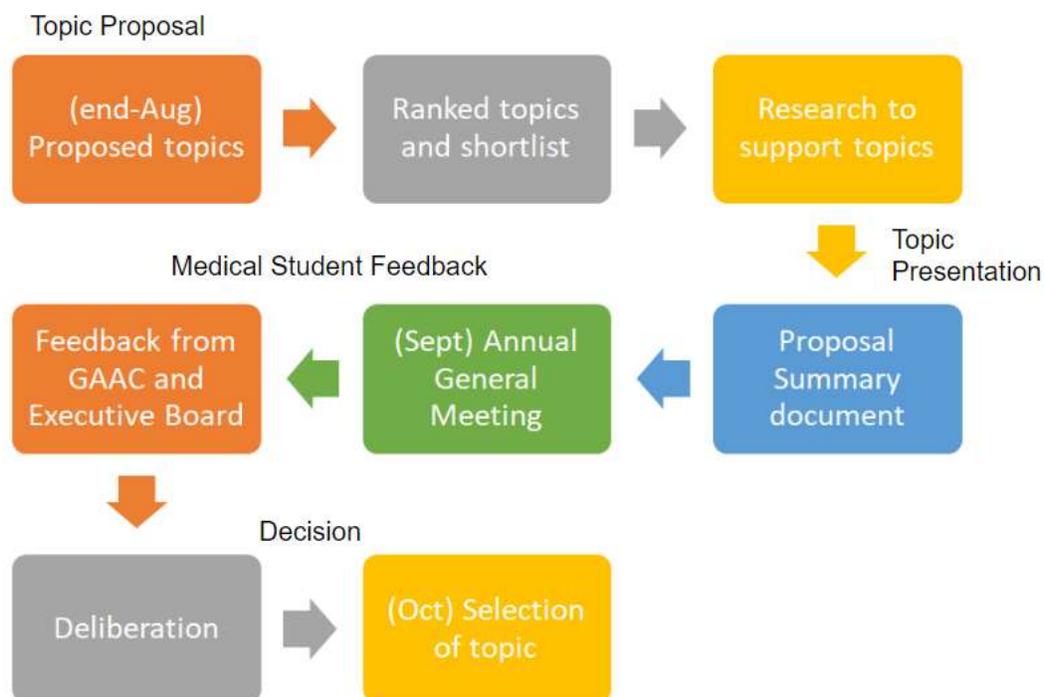


Figure: Day of Action Topic Selection Process

Challenges and Recommendations

One of the biggest challenges of selecting a topic for the Day of Action is balancing the wide interests that medical students have and as a team having to make decisions about what topics to shortlist and finally what topic to select. One way of mitigating this challenge would be to consider the topics in the context of the current political environment and decide what topic might make more of an impact this year. It was also proposed that the topic selection process be changed so that the final decision on the topic rests with medical students rather than the TSC, NOPA or the Director of GA. As such it was proposed, and approved by the CFMS executive board of directors that the topics be proposed at the AGM and schools will vote on the topic.

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The other consideration for the selecting the Day of Action topic is whether our goal is to be responsive vs. be persistent on a big topic. In other words, do we select a new topic from year to year in response to the changing political context and interests of medical students, or do we select one topic that we have considered important and continue building and advocating for it from year to year? It is worthwhile to spend time discussing the pros and cons of each with the TSC and consider why you have chosen to change the topic or why you are deciding to continue advocating for a previous topic.

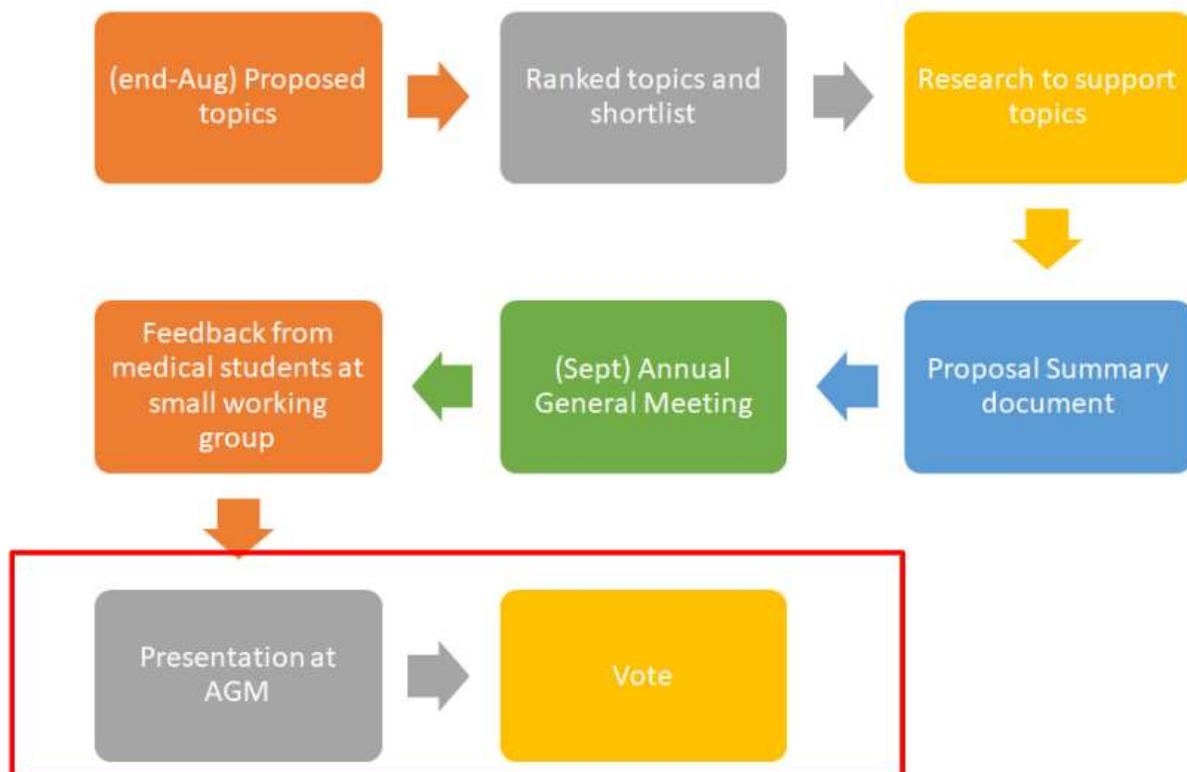


Figure: Approved topic selection process for Day of Action 2020.

Day of Action Research Committee

Our Process

The main responsibility of the Day of Action Research Committee (ResComm) is to research traditional and grey literature and summarize these findings in the context of the current political climate. This research is used to guide the development of asks, which are policy recommendations that we make to federal members of parliament (MPs), senators, and policymakers.

We divided the topic into key subtopics (see Day of Action 2019 Backgrounder Table of Contents) that were subsequently assigned to each member of the ResComm. These members

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were responsible for conducting research in this area. We had weekly/biweekly meetings where we came together as a team to debrief our findings, identify gaps in our knowledge, and identify areas for further research. We repeated this process several times. Finally, each ResComm

member was responsible for writing their respective sections for the background. Additionally, we had discussions to develop asks along the way.

As a side project we also developed a Medical Student Engagement Strategy for the Day of Action, that proposed ideas that local champions could use to bring awareness to the Day of Action topic and engage medical students in the Day of Action process.

Simultaneous to the research process was the community consultations process. A community consultation team was formed with a subgroup of ResComm members. In addition to ResComm members, the NOPA reached out to GAAC members and Global Health Advocates and invited them to participate in the process. Those involved identified, contacted, and met with key stakeholders and reported back to the community consultation team via a google form with a summary of their meeting. Each member of the community consultation team then reviewed every summary using an inductive approach to identify key themes that emerged from the consultation. A meeting was held to discuss these findings, which were then summarized into a community consultations review and summary document. This was used to guide the development of our asks to the federal government and the document was shared with our stakeholders for further use in their advocacy work.

Challenges and Recommendations

1. Training the Research Committee
 - a. On debriefing with ResComm 2019 members, it was brought up that training prior to the process would be beneficial. This could be a one-day teleconference/webinar that would take place at the end of Sept/early Oct.
 - b. The purpose of the training would be to provide a crash course on the organization and workings of the federal government and policy development, how to develop an effective ask, and provide preliminary background information on the proposed topic for the Day of Action.
 - c. This could include speakers such as Kelsey Shein and Holly Duggan from the Canadian Medical Association grassroots advocacy team, seasoned political advocates such as Dr. Philip Berger or Dr. Samir Sinha, and content experts on the proposed Day of Action topic.
2. Developing Asks
 - a. One of the challenges that we had was developing specific, realistic and targeted asks on the topic to the Federal Government. Many ideas were proposed that were either non-specific or too broad.

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- b. I believe that the proposed Research Committee Training would be helpful in this process as it would outline what an effective ask would look like and how to develop one, so that everyone on the team is on the same page and know what to pay attention to as they do their research.
 - c. It would also be helpful to start with identifying a clear problem or question(s) at the beginning of the process, rather than working to a solution from a topic.
 - d. Ideally, having a preliminary idea of what your asks will be from the beginning will help to guide the team's research and writing
 - e. Align your asks with what you heard from the community consultations and background research
3. Community Consultation Process
- a. Expanding the opportunity to engage in the consultation process to medical students outside of the ResComm accomplished a couple of goals: 1. Engaged medical students in the Day of Action by providing them with a concrete task to complete. 2. Put medical students into contact with community members to learn from those on the ground the challenges, victories, and stories related to the Day of Action topic. 3. Expanded our community consultation reach to include a larger and wider perspective on the topic.
 - b. The community consultation process is key to developing an advocacy campaign that aligns with the realities of our society and allows us as medical students to advocate with community.
 - c. One of the challenges that we encountered was that physicians were over-represented in our community consultations. This is likely because physicians are within the sphere of contacts for medical students and therefore easy to engage. More emphasis needs to be put on consulting with community organizations, patients and other experts directly. A more structured process on identifying community stakeholders needs to be developed.
 - d. Recommendations from Charles, previous Research Committee Chair Day of Action 2018
 - i. If the topic is amenable and if time permits, write a research proposal on the data collected from the consultations and seek research ethics approval from a Research Ethics Board (REB). This must be disclosed to anyone that is consulted.
 - ii. Start consultations as early as possible and ensure that there is good geographical representation in feedback.
 - iii. If possible, obtain transcripts of conversations. This will help if you want to do any sort of qualitative analysis in an unbiased way. Also get people who are consulted to agree in writing to be quoted in the backgrounder and other materials and to have their name be attached. This is a good time to figure out if anyone objects or is uncomfortable with these things.

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4. Timeline

- a. Finish a rough draft of the backgrounder EARLY! If possible, by the beginning of January! This way edits and comments can be made and there is still time for your team to make changes before the final backgrounder is due two weeks before the Day of Action.
- b. This will also give you an opportunity to think critically about the document, and whether the research supports the asks, if there are contradictory arguments, to identify whether anything is missing or repeated, and to develop the summary document and difficult questions presentation for the Day of Action.

5. Day of Action in Ottawa

- a. Medical student delegates gather from all across Canada in Ottawa to have meetings with the federal government on the topic. Being busy medical students, despite the backgrounder and supporting documents being shared ahead of time, for many this weekend is when they study and learn the topic to be discussed. It is the responsibility of the NOPA with select ResComm members that are in attendance and the invited keynote speakers to train the medical students on the topic.
- b. Some suggestions for scheduling: do training on the backgrounder early in the day, so that students have a chance to study it throughout, followed by political advocacy training on how to take with MPs, followed by speakers in the afternoon.
- c. Many delegates also commented that they wanted to learn more about how federal politics works, how the government is structured, and how change is affected. While brief training on this is provided by the CMA grassroots advocacy team, it maybe beneficial to send a short Youtube video to delegates prior to the Day of Action summarizing this process. I haven't looked, but I am sure there are some good Youtube videos out there can provide this information.

6. Leading a National Team

- a. One of the challenges of leading a national team is working with and motivating a team of people whom you have not met in person. As such is it important to develop a relationship with your team members throughout the process. Some things that I did that worked for me include:
 - i. Having a telephone conversation with each member of the team prior to the first team meeting to discuss expectations and goals. This helped me to identify what motivated each team member and how I could create opportunities to help them grow in their self-identified goals.
 - ii. Starting each meeting with an "ice-breaker". These were fun questions that let us learn from and about each other. Some of these activities involved using Slido (<https://www.sli.do/>), while others were just questions that each member took turn answering. Some example questions were: what is you most used emoji? What are some of your favourite books?

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What is your new years resolution/what is your favourite memory from the previous year? When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up? – use this as an opportunity to have conversations unrelated to the task at hand to develop relationships and a team. The goal is for people to have fun!

- iii. Have regularly scheduled meetings and follow-up each meeting with a summary of what was discussed including actionable items and what each member's responsibility is for the next meeting.
- iv. Following the Day of Action I debriefed with each member of the ResComm to receive their feedback on the process, whether their expectations were met, and suggestions for how we can improve.

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Canadian Federation of Medical Students | Fédération des étudiants et des étudiantes en médecine du Canada

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