



Canadian Federation of Medical Students Press Release

Future Physicians call upon Government of Canada to remove barriers to rural practice

OTTAWA, Feb. 6, 2012 – The Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) is bringing tomorrow's physicians to Parliament Hill for its annual Lobby Day. Medical students from Vancouver to St. John's will meet with Members of Parliament and Senators to explore strategies for improving access to health care in rural and remote regions of Canada.

The medical students believe that all Canadians – regardless of location – deserve adequate, quality care. According to Health Canada, the population-to-doctor ratio in rural Canada will grow to over three times the national average by 2020. "We want to work with the federal government to strengthen health care and ensure accessibility to all Canadians," says Chloé Ward, Vice President Advocacy for the Canadian Federation of Medical Students.

The CFMS applauds Parliament for addressing this issue. In March 2011, the federal government announced that it will forgive a portion of Canada Student Loans for new family physicians working in rural and remote communities. Nonetheless, the value of this incentive is limited. New graduates begin to pay off their loans during medical residency training, before they are eligible for the loan forgiveness. Noura Hassan, President of the Canadian Federation of Medical Student, says "We are requesting that the government defer repayment of these loans until the completion of medical residency training. This would more effectively attract new medical graduates to rural and remote communities and better serve the needs of Canadians."

The CFMS is also calling upon the federal government to allocate funds for the establishment of mentorship programs that attract rural students to medical school. While 1 in 5 Canadians live in a rural or remote area, this is true of only 1 in 10 medical students. Additionally, students from rural Canada are 2.5 times more likely to practice in a rural community upon the completion of their training. Mentorship programs in the United States and Australia have been highly successful in recruiting rural students to careers in medicine.

"These are simple, sensible strategies for improving health care access to those for whom it is least available," says Matthew Tenenbaum, Vice President of Communications. "It is important to ensure that the principle of accessible health care is realized everywhere in this country."

The Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) is a national organization that represents over 7500 medical students at 14 medical schools across Canada.

For more information:

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