



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Future doctors visit Parliament Hill to lobby for extended access to Canadian medical schools

OTTAWA, Feb. 7 - The Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) is bringing future physicians from across the country to Parliament Hill today for its Federal Lobby Day event. Medical students from St John's to Vancouver will meet with Members of Parliament, Senators, and bureaucrats to discuss the underrepresentation of low income and rural background individuals in Canadian medical schools.

The CFMS believes that the lack of adequate socioeconomic and geographic diversity in medical schools threatens to exacerbate family doctor shortages and physician scarcity in underserved communities. According to a 2007 survey, only 12.7% of Canadian medical students come from homes with annual incomes of less than \$40,000, compared to 36.7% of the general Canadian population. Incomes of over \$100,000 were reported by 46.7% of medical students, in contrast to only 19.4% of Canadians. Furthermore, only 10.8% of medical students hail from rural areas, compared to 22.4% of Canadians.

"These disproportionate numbers are having a huge impact on future access to health care," says Matthew Sheppard, CFMS president. "Students from low income backgrounds are more likely to treat disadvantaged patients while rural students are 2.5 times more likely to practice in a rural community. Both groups are more likely to practice family medicine in underserved areas, where we are currently experiencing shortages."

"While the CFMS understands that this lack of representation in medicine is multi-faceted and requires comprehensive action from many stakeholders, we believe that the federal government must play an important role in

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working towards short and long term solutions," argues Ashley Miller, CFMS Vice President Advocacy.

The CFMS is advocating for the establishment of government grants to cover the significant costs of application to medical school for students from low-income backgrounds. The CFMS is also calling on the federal government to establish funding for mentorship and outreach programs that target students from low-income and rural origins. Such pipeline programs have proven to be extremely effective, as the preparation necessary to reach medical school often begins as early as high school.

"Today's unbalanced medical school demographic is the product of social and financial barriers that disproportionately affect low-income and rural students," stresses Miller. "Investment in the proposed solutions will offer long-term pay offs in the form of improved physician distribution and better care for all Canadians."

"Ultimately," adds Sheppard, "It is the responsibility of decision makers to work towards more equitable access to medical education."

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

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