



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Medical Students Stand Opposed to PEI's Mandatory Return-of-Service Agreements

January 24 2012 – The Government of Prince Edward Island's new strategy for retaining physicians is deeply concerning for medical students at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) and other medical schools across the country.

During the provincial election campaign, the Liberal Party outlined a strategy for recruiting physicians to practice in PEI. Beginning in 2012, PEI medical students enrolling at MUN must commit to practice on the Island for three years upon completion of residency training. While this requirement will ensure at least four new PEI physicians each year, it will not encourage them to stay beyond their contract requirement. Rather, it will exacerbate the core issues underlying physician shortages.

Mandatory return-of-service agreements, such as that proposed by the Liberal government, are only a short-term solution to physician shortages. Onerous clinical demands and limited physician supports produce an unfavourable practice environment that physicians are likely to abandon at the end of their contract. This "revolving door" of physicians, who serve the community only out of legal obligation, is ultimately a detriment to patients' continuity of care.

A more pragmatic and appealing recruitment strategy would involve persuading – rather than compelling – medical graduates to practice in areas of need. New Brunswick has successfully retained local medical students studying at MUN by providing them opportunities to train in their home province prior to residency. Currently, PEI only offers clinical placements in

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Family Medicine, and there is potential for benefit in expanding these offerings to other specialties. More than ever before, medical students are pursuing education in specialized areas. While the recent establishment of a PEI Family Medicine Residency Program is a significant step, developing post-graduate training programs in other specialties is essential. Finally, increasing opportunities for Continuing Medical Education would greatly enhance physicians' practice environment and attract more graduates to serve the community.

The Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) supports the Medical Students Society at MUN in their opposition to PEI's mandatory return-of-service program. Such a program simply forces graduates into an undesirable practice setting, to no-one's benefit. Enhanced training opportunities that demonstrate the charm of Island practice would be a much more constructive investment.

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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