



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Medical Students Call on Federal Candidates to Offer Concrete Commitments on Health Care

OTTAWA, April 18 - Canada-wide surveys conducted by Nanos Research have repeatedly confirmed that Canadians view health care as the most important national issue of concern, above the economy. Despite this clear national priority, health care has failed to be adequately addressed during the current campaign period. With two weeks remaining before the election, Canadian medical students are calling on each federal party and candidate to clearly commit to their plan for health care investment in the future.

The Canada Health Act is a source of national pride that establishes the Federal government as the steward of health care delivery. However, there has been an increasing abdication of any Federal role, as critical health care issues are dismissed as provincial jurisdiction and there is a pervasive lack of enforcement of the Act despite evident violations occurring in several provinces. The Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) believes that each party and candidate must commit to a renewed Federal responsibility for health care and the enforcement of each of the principles of the Canada Health Act: public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability, and accessibility.

As the Health Accord approaches its expiration in 2014, it is likely that the government chosen in the current election will be responsible for the future of health transfers to provinces. The CFMS feels that the deferral of Health Accord review to Senate or Parliamentary committees in the future is a great disservice to Canadians who deserve to know where each party stands prior to this election. The CFMS calls on each party and candidate to commit to their course of action after 2014, be it the renewal of the current Health

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Accord with or without a 6% elevator clause or a shift to an alternative system such as provincial taxation credits.

As active participants in health care delivery, medical students are faced daily with the challenges of attempting to treat complex chronic illness in a system that was designed to address acute crisis. While health care professionals must work towards transformation of our current system to address modern health care needs, there is also a strong need for federal leadership in the improvement of our publicly funded system. Evidence suggests that the development of a national pharmacare strategy would increase access while decreasing costs. Similarly, investment in improved palliative care, home care, and long-term care capacity would improve patient care while controlling hospital backlogs, minimizing wait times and costs significantly. The CFMS calls on each party and candidate to offer their proposals for renewal of the health care system to address current needs.

While measures to transform the health care system will universally enhance quality of care, there remains a challenge to access for rural and underserved communities that must be addressed. As research suggests that the greatest indicator of physician practice in a rural community is rural origin, there is a strong need for measures to create medical school classes that are representative of the geographic and socioeconomic demographics of the Canadian population. The CFMS has met with representatives from each party to discuss the need for longitudinal pipeline projects and medical school admission bursaries that aim to recruit and support students from currently underserved rural and low income communities. The CFMS calls on each party and candidate to offer long-term solutions that address the core causes of inadequate representation in medical schools, instead of favouring short-term bandaid approaches such as return-of-service agreements.

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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