House of Commons
Chambre des communes
Canada

House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance – Pre-budget Consultations 2013

This brief is submitted by:

(•) **an organization** **Organization name:** Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada

or

( ) **an individual** **Name:** _____

Topic: Education and skills training

*Recommendation 1: Please provide a short summary of your recommendation.

Canada must foster a diverse physician workforce to meet the health care needs of all Canadians. To achieve this goal, the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada asks the Government of Canada to support a Medical Education Opportunities Fund that will provide bursary programs to reduce the cost of medical education for students from disadvantaged socioeconomic groups.

Expected cost or savings: From the pull-down menus, please indicate the expected cost or savings of your recommendation to the federal government and the period of time to which the expected cost or savings is related.

$1 million-4.9 million

3 years

Federal funding: Please provide a precise indication of how the federal government could fund your recommendation. For example, indicate what federal spending should be reallocated, what federal tax measure(s) should be introduced, eliminated or changed, etc.

Existing federal funding can be targeted toward the Medical Education Opportunities Fund, sourced from the Canada Student Grants program. Bursary programs, administered through the Fund, would be aimed at offsetting tuition fees and other educational costs for students who are unable to bear the full cost of medical education. Financial aid may also come in the form of stipends that help students from under-represented communities defray the costs of tuition for their first undergraduate degree.

Intended beneficiaries: Please indicate the groups of individuals, the sector(s) and/or the regions that would benefit by implementation of your recommendation.

The Medical Education Opportunities Fund bursary program will benefit prospective disadvantaged students as well as the under served populations they are likely to care for in the future. Lower income families are under-represented among medical students as are Aboriginal peoples. Also, rural and small town communities are under served as the physician workforce does not align with the Canadian population in terms of geographic distribution. The Fund will benefit under served communities by fostering a diverse physician workforce.

General impacts: Depending on the nature of your recommendation, please indicate how the standard of living of Canadians would be improved, jobs would be created, people would be trained, etc.

The Medical Education Opportunities Fund will create equal opportunities for students to pursue medical education and, ultimately, careers in medicine. The bursary and other financial aid programs will support students who come from lower income families and who cannot bear the full cost of medical education. The Fund will also foster greater access to health care for under served populations.

Topic: Education and skills training

Recommendation 2: Please provide a short summary of your recommendation.

Canada must foster a diverse physician workforce to meet the health care needs of all Canadians. To achieve this goal, the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada asks the Government of Canada to support a Medical Education Opportunities Fund that will fund pipeline programs that inspire and enable talented high school and undergraduate students, showing them that medical careers are within their reach.

Expected cost or savings: From the pull-down menus, please indicate the expected cost or savings of your recommendation to the federal government and the period of time to which the expected cost or savings is related.

$5 million -$9.9 million

3 years

Federal funding: Please provide a precise indication of how the federal government could fund your recommendation. For example, indicate what federal spending should be reallocated, what federal tax measure(s) should be introduced, eliminated or changed, etc.

Medical education pipeline programs can be developed through the Fund with financial support from federal-provincial-territorial labour market initiatives like the Strategic Training and Transition Fund. Pipeline initiatives would include summer programs that help build knowledge and academic skills for prospective medical students as well as mentoring experiences with physicians that have themselves come from under-represented communities.

Intended beneficiaries: Please indicate the groups of individuals, the sector(s) and/or the regions that would benefit by implementation of your recommendation.

Medical Education Opportunities Fund pipeline programs will benefit prospective students from under-represented and under served populations. For example, lower income families are under-represented among medical students, as are Aboriginal populations. Also, rural and small town communities are under served as the physician workforce does not align with the Canadian population in terms of geographic distribution. The Fund will develop pipeline programs that reach out to these populations, providing early exposures to medical education settings.

General impacts: Depending on the nature of your recommendation, please indicate how the standard of living of Canadians would be improved, jobs would be created, people would be trained, etc.

Medical Education Opportunities Fund pipeline programs will reach out to prospective students, helping them acquire the skills and knowledge they need to compete for high-demand medical school positions. Summer jobs and placements will provide pre-medical experiences that are given weight in the M.D. program admissions process. Communities will experience social and economic benefits as physicians are more likely to return to practice medicine in under served areas.

Topic: Education and skills training

Recommendation 3: Please provide a short summary of your recommendation.

Canada must foster a diverse physician workforce to meet the health care needs of all Canadians. Current federal funding must be targeted to pipeline and bursary programs that bring greater balance to the physician workforce. The Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada asks the Government of Canada to support a Medical Education Opportunities Fund that will produce targeted, measurable evidence to ensure that new programs meet their intended goals and objectives.

Expected cost or savings: From the pull-down menus, please indicate the expected cost or savings of your recommendation to the federal government and the period of time to which the expected cost or savings is related.

$1 million-4.9 million

3 years

Federal funding: Please provide a precise indication of how the federal government could fund your recommendation. For example, indicate what federal spending should be reallocated, what federal tax measure(s) should be introduced, eliminated or changed, etc.

The federal government funds a variety of data initiatives through agencies such as the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the Health Council of Canada, Statistics Canada, the Canadian Institutes for Health Research and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. The evaluation arm of the Medical Education Opportunities Fund may be supported through federal initiatives such as these, which develop evidence linking investment to societal outcomes.

Intended beneficiaries: Please indicate the groups of individuals, the sector(s) and/or the regions that would benefit by implementation of your recommendation.

The data and analysis arm of the Medical Education Opportunities Fund will benefit multiple individuals, groups and sectors. In particular, it will support the evaluation of the impact of new bursary and pipeline programs. It will also benefit academic leaders who will act upon the evidence to enhance their medical education programs.

General impacts: Depending on the nature of your recommendation, please indicate how the standard of living of Canadians would be improved, jobs would be created, people would be trained, etc.

The Program Evaluation arm of the Medical Education Opportunities Fund will produce data to help inform the development of further initiatives designed to improve the provision of health care to under-served and under-represented populations. It will measure success in attracting under-represented populations to the practice of medicine and will evaluate the effect that the programs have in stimulating the social, economic and health dimensions of under-served communities.

Please use this page if you wish to provide more explanation about your recommendation(s).

Acknowledging the Canadian mosaic and pursuing their commitment to social accountability, Canada's faculties of medicine are looking at how medical students compare to the Canadian population across various diversity dimensions. Early findings show for example that, while medical students represent all income categories, they are more likely to come from higher-income families. Almost 45% of medical students report coming from families with annual income of $100,000 or more, compared to about 26% of all Canadians(1). Survey results also show that Black, Filipino and Latin American peoples tend to be relatively less present among the medical student population, as compared to the total population(1). While we are less able to measure the urban-rural origins of medical students, reports show that the physician workforce is less concentrated in rural settings compared to the population of Canada (2). The data suggest that greater alignment must be achieved between the physician workforce and the population of Canada.

The AFMC recommends the creation of a Medical Education Opportunities Fund that will increase diversity among applicants to medical school, and ultimately, Canada's physician workforce. The Medical Education Opportunities Fund will subsidize three activities: 1) pipeline programs to inspire and enable talented high school and undergraduate students from under-represented groups to pursue careers in medicine and in health-related research, 2) the allocation of bursaries which will dramatically reduce the costs of attending medical school for Canadians from low socioeconomic strata and other disadvantaged groups, and 3) databases to better understand the demographic and other characteristic of Canadian medical students. This proposal would cost $6.5M in the first year, $10.5M in the second year, and $14.5M in the third year. The fund would reach a steady-state cost of $18.5M in subsequent years.

References:

(1) Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada.
http://www.afmc.ca/deans_list_media/Diversity%20in%20Medical%20Education_v2.pdf.
(2) Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement.
http://www.hhr-rhs.ca/images/stories/Myth-International-Med-Grads-E.sflb.pdf.

*Please note that at least one recommendation must be provided