

**Initiative for the Repatriation of British Columbia Raised
International Medical Graduates**

**Presentation to the Ministry of Health
Province of British Columbia**

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By

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**On behalf of BC students and graduates of medical programmes outside Canada
and their parents and families.**

Initiative for the Repatriation of British Columbia Raised International Medical Graduates

Background to the Initiative:

This initiative, which commenced in July 2009, was begun by a group of citizens of British Columbia who are immediate family members of BC raised medical students in International Medical Schools (IMS) or BC raised International Medical Graduates (IMGs). We would like to make a proposal to the Ministry of Health of the Province of British Columbia concerning the repatriation of BC raised International Medical Graduates who represent a potential source of new medical doctors for our province. This comes at a time when there is an acute and growing physician shortage in the world and when there are at least 1500 Canadian citizens studying in reputable foreign medical schools.^{1,2} Of these, at least 200 are from British Columbia as evidenced by the information we have gathered in the last few weeks.³

The catalyst for this initiative was BC Premier, Gordon Campbell, who recognized this source of physicians in the Throne Speech for the 4th session of the 38th Parliament of British Columbia on February 12th 2008. In it on page 29, it states: "A new framework to allow Canadian citizens trained outside Canada to find residencies and practice in BC will be developed and implemented".⁴ Soon after, Premier Campbell met with the editorial board of the Vancouver Sun and pledged "that Canadians trained outside the country, at accredited institutions, will get residency positions to enable them to work here."⁵

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That announcement created an opportunity for British Columbia to begin to attract BC raised IMGs, virtually none of whom currently consider applying for

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postgraduate residency positions in BC. They opt instead to go to other provinces and countries that have warmly welcomed them upon their graduation. BC has fallen behind other provinces, such as Manitoba and Ontario, who have attracted BC raised IMGs. Manitoba has the most progressive system in which all IMGs compete openly with Canadian medical school graduates for postgraduate residency training positions. ⁶ Unless changes are made in BC, this loss will continue, as will an increased effort on the part of the USA to attract Canadians graduating from Canadian and international medical schools. ²

Our Premise:

British Columbians, who have attended a foreign medical school recognized by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC, who have achieved a medical degree and who have fulfilled the requirements of the Medical Council of Canada for postgraduate residency training positions in Canada, should be welcomed back to their home province to compete for such positions. Most of these graduates have spent 4-6 years in medical training at their own expense (approximately \$275,000 per graduate) and have come back to Canada to do electives during their medical training. Once qualified, they should be allowed to compete for all the BC residency positions, using the same criteria as those for Canadian medical school graduates. Specifically, they should not be required to spend at least another full year after graduation waiting to compete with foreign raised IMGs for a 3 month "evaluation programme" at St. Paul's Hospital, hoping to be selected for one of a very small number (18) of residency positions designated for IMGs. ⁷

The University of British Columbia Medical School programme has expanded since 2004 to now produce 256 graduates each year. ⁸ The National Conference on Physician Human Resources Task Force advocates "an increase in residency positions such that there will be 120 residency positions for every 100 graduates from Canadian medical schools." ⁹ In 2009, there were 258 residency positions in BC available in the Canadian Resident Matching Service (CaRMS), ¹⁰ that is only

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two more than the UBC graduating class. If this number was to increase to the recommended figure of 281, then there would be almost enough spaces to accommodate the return of BC raised IMGs to do their postgraduate training in BC. By comparison, the United States resident matching programme has 1.43 training positions per US medical graduate.¹¹ This is why most of our Canadian raised IMGs locate in the United States. In addition, the US Match is open in its first iteration to all comers. Of note also is the fact that graduates from US medical schools can freely enter into the first iteration of the CaRMS match,¹² regardless of their nationality. There are no barriers to their entry and no return of service clauses. In 2009, 12 graduates of US medical schools matched into residency training positions in Canada.¹⁰

Our Proposal:

Our initiative proposes that the BC Ministry of Health promptly effect the changes necessary to enable British Columbia raised IMGs to enter the first round (iteration) of the Canadian Resident Matching Service (CaRMS) match, commencing in 2010, and to compete for BC residency training positions. Selection criteria should be the same as used for graduates of Canadian and US medical schools, based on the merits of their academic record, their interview and the results of the standard licencing examinations of the Medical Council of Canada. If successful, there should be no required return of service and they should be eligible for the incentive programmes offered to BC physicians to secure proper distributed medical care in our province.

Benefits to British Columbia:

- BC will keep pace with the attrition of its medical doctors, instead of being in a negative balance compared to other provinces with more progressive IMG programmes.

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- BC will enjoy instant access to well-trained doctors at no cost to the taxpayers of BC, as these graduates have paid for their education entirely from their own resources.
- The doctors selected for postgraduate residency positions would now come from a much larger pool of qualified Canadians, resulting in the retention of the best possible doctors for British Columbia's health care in the future. It is well recognized that physicians tend to practice in the area where they take their postgraduate training.

Next Steps in Achieving this Proposal:

1. The barriers to entry to the first round of the CaRMS match should be removed. Liaison with the Canadian Resident Matching Service should be prompt as any changes in the eligibility criteria would need to be made by October 31st 2009 in order to facilitate entry into the 2010 matching process.
2. Liaison with the University of British Columbia medical school is essential. These BC raised, internationally trained, medical graduates, should be considered as equivalent to another component of the distributed medical school model. Currently they are welcomed by UBC in their electives programme. Adding them into the postgraduate programme would enrich the already positive environment at UBC.
3. The number of postgraduate residency training positions in BC should be increased to accommodate the return of these BC physicians.
4. The support of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC is necessary to maintain the excellent standard of care in BC. Their full participation in the process would be welcome.

Conclusions:

This initiative to repatriate British Columbia raised International Medical Graduates is a positive and academically enriching opportunity that could put the

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province of BC in a positive balance of physician human resources in the coming years. By implementing this programme, BC would enjoy a steady return of physicians who will want to come to this province for their postgraduate training and practice. Currently they are being deterred from returning to BC because of difficulties in obtaining this training.

Our initiative, begun in July 2009, has garnered enormous interest by over 200 BC raised International Medical Students and Graduates, along with hundreds of parents who have helped their children fund their medical education overseas. They all want Premier Campbell's promise to come true. Our initiative is aimed at replacing the outdated, inadequate system in BC and replacing it with the Manitoba model.

Thank you for considering this proposal. You have the commitment of the members of this initiative to support the Ministry of Health in fulfilling the promise of the Throne Speech of February 2008 and Premier Campbell in pledging that Canadians trained outside the country will get residency training positions to enable them to train and work in BC.

Respectfully submitted

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