



Ottawa, Canada K1A 0J9

April 25, 2019

Mr. Sean Fraser
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change
2A - 115 MacLean Street
New Glasgow, Nova Scotia
B2H 4M5

Dear MP Fraser:

Thank you for working with me on Canada Student Loan forgiveness for family doctors and nurses in rural Nova Scotia. I appreciate your continued advocacy on this important matter – for the residents of Sheet Harbour, Middle Musquodoboit, Musquodoboit Harbour, and the people of Nova Scotia.

I understand that the recruitment and retention of doctors and nurses in rural Nova Scotia continues to be a challenge. As you know, there are currently provisions within the Canada Student Loans Program that allows for doctors and nurses to have their loans forgiven if they choose to practice in under-served rural or remote communities. Every year, this initiative provides support to thousands of family doctors, residents in family medicine, nurse practitioners, and nurses.

I hear your concerns and I take them seriously. These healthcare professionals play an important role in ensuring the health and well-being of rural and remote communities. Our government has made significant changes to student financial assistance to ease the cost of going to school for these highly trained professionals. Since forming government, we have:

- Increased the amount of support for non-repayable Canada Student Grants by 50% to help those from low- and middle-income families;
- Changed the Repayment Assistance Program so applicants won't have to repay their Canada Student Loan until they are earning at least \$25,000 per year;
- Expanded eligibility for Canada Student Grants and Loans for part-time students and students with dependent children;
- Made the first six months after graduation interest and payment free; and
- Reduced the interest rate of Canada Student Loans through Budget 2019.

However, better is always possible and I must acknowledge the work that you have done to highlight this very important issue. As a result, for the purposes of this particular program, I have asked my officials to consult with Statistics Canada to see if we can determine what constitutes an underserved rural or remote community in a more equitable way that would not negatively impact other regions. I have also instructed my officials to initiate an evaluation of the Canada Student Loan Forgiveness Program.

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I thank you again for your tireless work – on behalf of Canadians, rural Nova Scotians, and the people of Central Nova.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P. Hajdu', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

The Honourable Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour

c.c. The Honourable Navdeep Bains, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development

The Honourable Bernadette Jordan, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Rural Economic Development

The Honourable Ginette Petitpas-Taylor, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Health

The Honourable Randy Delorey, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Health and Wellness, Nova Scotia