

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

RE: MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH IN TRAINING BURSARY PROGRAM (MOH Bursary Program)

Q1. What qualifications does the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) require for a Medical Officer of Health (MOH) or Associate Medical Officer of Health (AMOH)?

Section 64 of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA)* stipulates that an MOH or an AMOH must be a physician i.e. hold a current *Certificate of Registration for Independent Practice* with the College of Physician and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO), whose proposed appointment has been approved by the minister and who possesses the qualifications and requirements stated under O. Reg. 566 of the HPPA. These are as follows:

The person must be the holder of:

- a) *a fellowship in community medicine from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada; or*
- b) *a certificate, diploma or degree from a university in Canada that is granted after not less than one academic year of full time post-graduate studies or its equivalent in public health comprising,*
 - i. *epidemiology,*
 - ii. *quantitative methods,*
 - iii. *management and administration, and*
 - iv. *disease prevention and health promotion; or*
- c) *a qualification from a university outside of Canada that is considered by the Minister to be equivalent to the qualifications set out in clause (b).*

NOTE: The decision as to whether a person meets the qualifications and requirements of the regulations is that of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Q2. Who is eligible for the Bursary Program?

To be eligible for the MOH Bursary Program, a physician must:

- Be employed by a local board of health (e.g. Acting MOH, Physician-Consultant)
- Hold a current *Certificate of Registration for Independent Practice* with the College of Physician and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO)
- Demonstrate good standing with the CPSO
- Be willing to complete a Masters in Public Health (MPH) program or equivalent on a part-time basis that meets the requirements for qualification as a MOH or Associate MOH under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*
- Continue to provide Acting MOH or public health Physician-Consultant services
- Sign a return of service agreement with the sponsoring board of health.

Q3. Does the Bursary Program funding support Acting MOH physicians who wish to pursue specialty training in Community Medicine?

No. The ministry's Physician Re-entry Program was developed to support physicians who wish to re-enter the post-graduate medical education system or pursue graduate studies in public health on a full-time basis. Bursary Program funding is to support physicians currently working in a public health unit who will pursue their masters in public health education on a part-time basis while continuing to provide Acting MOH or Physician-Consultant services.

Q4. What masters programs are eligible for funding through the Bursary Program?

Eligible programs are those that meet the requirements for qualification as a MOH or Associate MOH under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. There are a large number of public health programs available on a part-time basis and a growing number of these have long distance learning components. Since the objective of the Bursary program is to help physicians obtain MOH or AMOH qualifications, boards of health sponsoring candidates must submit applications for Bursary funding (including a summary of the candidate's proposed masters program) to the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH)/ministry for review and approval.

Q5. How much time must a Bursary physician commit to his/her part-time studies and health unit/board of health activities?

Time commitments are to be negotiated between the board of health and the physician. The Bursary physician must work with his/her board of health and colleagues to determine lines of authority and obligations regarding attendance at board meetings etc. to ensure that public health service delivery and infectious disease monitoring and control continue smoothly while the physician is pursuing his/her part-time studies.

In the event of a significant outbreak or public health emergency, Acting MOHs or Physician-Consultants may be required to defer their studies and assume full-time duties until the immediate risk to the public's health is contained.

Q6. What if the Bursary physician feels that he/she is unable to provide Acting MOH or physician consulting services while pursuing part-time studies?

If the physician is unable to provide Acting MOH or physician consulting services while doing part-time graduate studies, he/she should consider pursuing full-time studies through the ministry's Physician Re-entry Program.

Q7. How flexible is the Bursary physician's time commitment?

The physician and board should negotiate a formal time commitment. However, there may be times when a physician requires an additional day to complete a paper or study for an exam. Common sense should prevail and the physician should make up his/her time in the following weeks.

Some programs may require that the physician attend courses in 2-4 week blocks which should be included in the physician's return of service. The board of health will need to arrange coverage as necessary.

Q8. How much compensation will a Bursary physician receive from the board?

The sponsoring board will pay the Bursary physician salary and benefits at his/her current compensation level throughout the period necessary to complete the masters course on a part-time basis (4-6 years) and provide funds for tuition, travel and accommodation related to this academic pursuit up to a total of \$50,000. The ministry will reimburse the board up to a total of \$50,000 or 75%, *whichever is less*, for the combined cost of travel/accommodation and tuition over the period of time necessary for the physician to complete the masters course.

Q9. Who pays for related education expenses such as application expenses, home computers, internet hook-up, books etc.?

Educational expenses apart from tuition fees, travel and accommodation are not included within the province's \$50,000 commitment and are not cost-shareable with the province.

Q10. Is it possible to change part-time graduate studies programs?

The intent of the Bursary Program is to assist candidates in obtaining their MOH or AMOH qualifications in a timely fashion. The physician would need to resubmit such a request to the board of health who would forward it to the CMOH for approval. If approved, current Bursary program funding parameters and expectations for completion would persist.

Q11. Where will the Bursary physician be expected to return service?

Bursary physicians are expected to return service at their sponsoring health units.

Q12. How long will the physician's return-of-service (ROS) be? How will it be calculated?

Return of service will be calculated using the ratio of 1:2 i.e. one (1) day ROS for every two (2) paid study days taken. The Table below provides an example of how the ROS could be calculated.

Length of Graduate Program	Approx. # of days per week studying	Total # of paid study days taken	Return of Service requirement (months)
1 year	2 days	80	2 months
2 years	1 day	80	2 months
2 years	2 days	160	4 months
3 years	1 day	120	3 months
3 years	2 days	240	6 months
4 years	1 day	160	4 months
4 years	2 days	320	8 months

Q13. What happens if the Bursary physician must take a leave of absence due to illness or parental leave?

Any leave of absence from work due to illness or parental leave must be guided by the health unit's workplace policies and procedures. A similar leave of absence from the graduate studies program must be guided by the Bursary physician's university program's policies and procedures and with consultation of the program advisor. Boards of health must notify the CMOH/ministry about changes relevant to reimbursement of bursary expenses so that decisions can be made on a case-by-case basis.

Q14. What happens if the Bursary physician chooses not to complete his/her course work and/or return of service?

If a physician does not fulfill the education and service requirements identified in the application and return of service agreement he/she will be required to repay costs associated with the Bursary position to the sponsoring board of health. These costs will be identified in his/her agreement with the board and may include:

- A portion of salary and benefits earned to reflect the study days taken
- Tuition and travel/accommodation costs associated with the position
- Interest

If the physician does not return to service, he/she will receive a letter from the sponsoring board of health requesting repayment. Full repayment is required within the time period specified in the repayment letter. Failure to repay may result in the file being referred for collections and may affect the physician's credit rating.

Subsequently, the ministry may recover Bursary costs for tuition travel and accommodation from the board of health.