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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ottawa, February 23, 2005

Members of the National Professional Association Coalition on Tuition (NPACT) are disappointed that the 2005 budget does not include any significant new funding or initiatives relating to post secondary education. Tuition fees in professional programs remain among the highest compared to other programs, in some cases \$16 000 per year or more.

"Members of NPACT are very concerned that high tuition fees in professional programs limit access to the affluent, and that those from lesser means who do attend are having to amass mortgage-sized personal debt to do so," says NPACT Chair and Scarborough-based physician Dr. William Easton.

"NPACT believes that the federal government has several key roles to play in post secondary education if Canada is to reap its full economic and social benefits. For one, we believe it needs to increase and target transfer funding for post secondary education, to help alleviate some of pressures that are driving tuition fee increases. It also needs to provide more grants and debt reduction strategies for students and new graduates, to help reduce the potential negative influence of debt on *what* and *where* graduates practice. These have implications for the delivery of services to the Canadian public. Third, we would have liked to see the federal government place as a priority new research devoted specifically to the impacts of high professional program tuition fees and student debt."

"We will continue to press the federal government to meet these goals, for the benefit of all Canadians," he concluded.

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