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Attention: Health care reporters and editors; members of the parliamentary press gallery; assignment editors

FEDERAL BUDGET 2003 - WHERE IS THE FUNDING FOR NURSING SCHOOLS?

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The Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) questions the intentions of the Hon. John Manley, Minister of Finance, in his 2003 Budget announcement. He claims to recognize the need for investment in people, notably in their health and their learning opportunities. But there is no specific mention of funding for nursing research and education. Without nursing research and education, it will be impossible to provide the services necessary to maintain the health of Canadians.

The \$16 billion Health Reform Fund announced by the Hon. John Manley encompasses three very broad areas of our healthcare system. In two of these areas - Primary Health Care and Home Care – nurses play a key role. But there is very little detail offered on what funding will be available to recruit and educate nurses – to provide the classrooms, laboratories and professors to teach them.

“With this reform funding, we expected changes to include the full utilization of the clinical skills, abilities, and knowledge of both new nursing graduates and existing nurses within the Canadian healthcare system as part of meeting the current demands on our system.” says Dr. Carole Orchard, President of CASN.

There is no guarantee that some of this funding will go to our under-funded nursing schools”, says Orchard. “Increased financial support for nursing research and education will result in the levels of university prepared nurses required to care for our citizens in hospitals, in homecare, in communities. But will the schools receive any of the funding?”

The public and politicians know that the demand for nursing graduates is great - and supply is far short of the need. Increased financial support for students and nursing schools is absolutely necessary if we are to graduate the number of nurses needed to provide health care for the Canadian public. The 88 faculties and schools of nursing represented by CASN are operating at capacity. Without financial support and more professors, it will be impossible to produce the nurses necessary to ensure the success of the health system reform, let alone sustain the Canadian healthcare system.

The Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) is the national voice of nursing education and scholarship.

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