

Investing in In-Person Collaboration: Why Supporting Professional Travel to Meetings and Conferences Matters More Than Ever

May 5, 2025 — In an era increasingly dominated by virtual communication, the Canadian Organization of Medical Physicists (COMP) emphasizes the vital importance of supporting radiation medicine professionals—especially Medical Physicists working in healthcare, research, and education—to attend in-person meetings and conferences. These gatherings remain irreplaceable in fostering meaningful connections, accelerating innovation, and driving improvements in professional practice.

In-person conferences and meetings provide unique opportunities for professionals to share their work directly with peers across the country, receive immediate feedback, and engage in nuanced discussions that often lead to new ideas and collaborations. The richness of this face-to-face engagement cannot be replicated through online engagement.

Professional gatherings are where breakthroughs begin—where a conference hall conversation sparks a joint research project, where a shared challenge leads to a solution, and where the seeds of future clinical and operational advances are planted. By restricting medical physicist's ability to attend conferences, organizations deny their patients the benefits of important clinical advancements.

This comes at a time when recent studies project a significant shortage of medical physicists across Canada, underscoring the urgent need to invest in retention, recruitment, and the professional development of this highly specialized workforce. Supporting attendance at professional gatherings is one of the most effective ways to inspire, equip, and retain the next generation of medical physicists.

Key benefits of providing professional travel funds:

- **Knowledge Exchange:** Presenting and attending sessions allows Medical Physicists to stay at the forefront of their fields, discover cutting-edge research, and engage in real-time dialogue about emerging best practice and radiation safety.
- **Network Building:** Face-to-face meetings enable the building of strong, national (and international) trust-based professional networks that are critical to long-term success and enhance collaborations between provincial healthcare authorities. While virtual connections are valuable, especially for ongoing engagement, they are most effective when grounded in the relationships built through in-person interaction. We are not opposed to virtual connection – but the complete omission of in-person engagement undermines the foundation needed to sustain meaningful professional collaboration.
- **Strategic Perspectives:** Conferences provide neutral venues where federal, provincial, academic, and commercial interests can come together, allowing the assembly of a complete picture of the radiation medicine landscape in Canada.
- **Professional Development:** Conferences provide unique opportunities for mentorship, recruitment, skill-building, and leadership growth that cannot be replicated through online forums and participation.
- **Institutional Enhancement and Advancement:** Attendees return with actionable insights and strategies that directly benefit their organizations and the populations they serve. In addition, institutional reputations are enhanced through the participation of each organization's excellent scientists and engineers.

COMP urges institutions, healthcare employers, and funding bodies to recognize the strategic value of investing in travel support for conferences and professional meetings. These experiences not only advance individual careers but also elevate organizational excellence and drive sector-wide progress.

For more information about our efforts to support professional development and collaboration, please contact:

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