

# President's Letter

November 2, 2012

## Update on rural fee-for-service retention bonus program



**Tony Gabriel,  
MD, CCFP, FCFP  
President**

Dear Colleagues:

The Department of Health and Community Services has recently issued final assessments to rural fee-for-service physicians who have applied for the Year 2 rural retention bonus.

During the first phase of my President's Tour, many of you expressed frustration with the assessment process and the absence of timely and sufficient information about the eligibility criteria. In particular, members who have had their applications rejected have expressed disappointment with the process.

The retention bonus for rural fee-for-service physicians is a new feature of the current *Memorandum of Agreement* (MOA). In accordance with the MOA, in order to qualify for the bonus physicians are required to have an established relationship with an RHA and be in active practice. Because the specific criteria to meet the spirit and intent of the program had not yet been finalized, interim criteria were applied in order to avoid a lapsing of government funds.

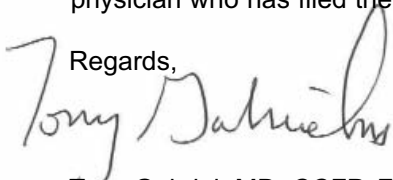
The current policy (attached) does, in fact, provide more clarity about the criteria physicians must meet to be eligible for the bonus.

Both Government and the NLMA appreciate and agree that the policy may be subject to further refinement as the program is implemented for each year of the four-year MOA. Although there may well be further refinements to the criteria, the fundamental aim of the program will not change. Specifically, it is to strike a balance between recognizing the important contribution that rural physicians make to the province and their joint obligation with the RHA to meet the needs of the public in a manner that shoulders the burden fairly among medical colleagues.

Based on our experience in implementing the program and the feedback we have received from our membership to date, we are encouraging those physicians who question the rejection of their application to submit a formal appeal to Dr. Larry Alteen at the Department of Health and Community Services, with a copy to Mr. Robert Ritter at the NLMA. Your appeal should include a written explanation as to why you believe your application for the bonus should be accepted.

The NLMA and the Department of Health and Community Services have agreed to participate in a bilateral review process for each physician who wishes to appeal the rejection of their Year 2 rural fee-for-service retention bonus. This may include a direct discussion with the individual physician who has filed the appeal in order to ensure fairness and clarity.

Regards,



Tony Gabriel, MD, CCFP, FCFP  
President

Encl. (1)

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