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# President's Letter

March 22, 2013

## Members asked to cast their vote on the proposed NLMA governance model



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

Dear Colleagues:

The NLMA held a province-wide Special General Meeting on March 19 to give members an opportunity to learn and ask questions about the proposed changes to the NLMA's governance structures prior to the vote of the membership.

Formal approval of the membership is required to authorize the new governance structure, which will be determined by a secret ballot vote prior to the AGM. We ask that all members eligible to vote review the enclosed documents, including an analysis of the proposed governance model, backgrounder and governance model diagrams, prior to casting your vote. We also ask that you carefully read the voting instructions for casting your electronic ballot.

We initiated our governance review and strategic planning process in 2011. We believed it was time for the Association to examine our governance and representational structures to ensure we are well-equipped to respond to the challenges of the changing medico-political landscape, while at the same time serving our members better. The chronology of our governance review is explained in more detail in the enclosed backgrounder.

Through extensive consultations and a review of best practices from similar organizations, we determined that the Association's current governance structures may actually limit our ability to respond to future challenges.

We know that the way we finance health care in Canada is on the cusp of profound change. Governments across Canada are tightening their budgets by reining in health care spending and they are now turning their attention to physician fees and payment models as potential areas of finding cost savings. Judging by the negotiations with other public sector unions both here in the province and across the country, there is no question that we are witnessing evidence of a "new normal" taking shape.

At the same time, demand for care has grown exponentially. As demand on services increases, so too does the public's demand for transparency and accountability. Patients are now health care consumers and they are very concerned about quality, safety and accessibility.

This rapidly changing health care landscape requires radical changes. If physicians are to effectively adapt to these changes then we, and our Association, must be agents of change. The NLMA's existing governance structures must conform to modern practices so that we are able to be flexible enough to effectively respond to these challenges, and represent and support our members over the coming decade.

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Page 2 of 2

In September, the NLMA released its *Strategic Plan 2013-2018*, which sets priorities and direction for the Association and redefines our values and mission. In order to achieve our mission, we need to have engaged members and, perhaps most importantly, we need to have local activism. The new governance structure we are proposing sets out to provide more opportunities for member participation at the grassroots level.

The primary component of the proposed governance model is a framework that includes a shift to a smaller, at-large board of directors with mechanisms to facilitate enhanced member engagement. This includes more frequent provincial tours to meet face-to-face with members; rotating board meetings outside St. John's; more frequent special general meetings using tele- and video-conferencing technology; and, other outreach initiatives.

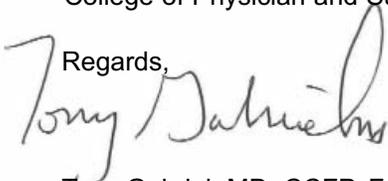
To ensure that members in all areas of the province have opportunities to be involved with NLMA decision making, we are also proposing the creation of four standing committees and several councils and ad hoc committees to represent members' interests. These committees will report directly to the Board and will be assigned time-limited and policy-specific tasks to conduct the work necessary to achieve the objectives of the NLMA's strategic plan.

All of these changes are designed to enable the Association to better support and represent you, the members of the NLMA. Our goal is to build a more vibrant Association that is inclusive, responsive and effective.

We are asking all eligible members to review the enclosed options paper, which explains the proposed changes and transition to the new board and committee structure in more detail, prior to casting your vote.

Voter eligibility is defined as any NLMA member in good standing who holds a full or provisional license with the College of Physician and Surgeons of Newfoundland and Labrador on the date of this letter.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Gabriel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "T".

Tony Gabriel, MD, CCFP, FCFP  
President