
President's Letter

September 2, 2014

NLMA issues notice to start negotiations, work continues on arbitration terms of reference



Wendy Graham, MD, CCFP
President

Dear Colleagues:

On August 26, the NLMA formally submitted its 30-day notice to the Minister of Finance to begin negotiations for a new memorandum of agreement (MOA).

Our current agreement with government expired on September 30, 2013. The Board has adopted a negotiating mandate based on consultations with members over the past year. It has also appointed a Negotiations Committee consisting of the NLMA President, Past President, President-Elect and a board member at-large.

The priorities that will guide us in the negotiations process include maintaining competitiveness, primary care reform, modernizing the MOA, greater fairness among physician groups and health system sustainability.

The 2009-2013 MOA remains in full force and effect until a new agreement is signed. If an agreement is not achieved within 12 months from the date that negotiations commence, both NLMA and government can trigger arbitration as a dispute resolution mechanism.

Arbitration Terms of Reference

In the *President's Letter* of April 29, 2014, we advised you that the NLMA's plan was to finalize the terms of reference for binding arbitration with the provincial government before launching negotiations for the next MOA. The terms of reference are the procedural aspects of arbitration such as time limits, the selection of arbitrators, and methods of reporting, that are necessary to delineate in the event arbitration is necessary after 12 months of negotiation. At the present time, the terms of reference are still not completed even though government received our first proposal in May, 2012. In May 2014, the government indicated it would respond to the NLMA's proposal and in June 2014 we received its response. Further discussions with government are now necessary to address the issues raised in their response.

Given these delays, and considering that the four-year term of our current MOA was reached a year ago, the NLMA Board of Directors has decided that negotiations for a new MOA should start as soon as possible. As we begin negotiations this fall we still plan to conclude the arbitration terms of reference as a separate discussion. Members can be assured that we will not trade off progress at one table for progress at the other. While we are disappointed that the terms of reference have not yet been concluded, we are committed to working with the government to ensure this matter is resolved.

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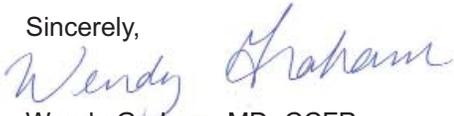
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Fall President's Tour

Physicians have been provided with many opportunities for input and will continue to be consulted as the NLMA enters negotiations with government. The NLMA Executive Director and I will be meeting with members throughout the province during my President's Tour in October. The focus of the Tour will be on negotiations. Visit the online calendar at www.nlma.nl.ca for a complete list of President's Tour dates and locations.

In addition to the President's Tour, the NLMA Board continues to hold rotating member town hall meetings throughout the province. Members are also invited to inform us at any time of any specific concerns, issues or ideas that you feel ought to be considered during negotiations. As this process unfolds, it will be important for members to support one another and be united.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wendy Graham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wendy Graham, MD, CCFP
President