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# President's Letter

February 17, 2016



**Jonathan Greenland**  
MD, FRCP  
President

## NLMA seeks physician advice on tackling fiscal challenges

Dear Colleagues:

The government has embarked on a multi-year renewal initiative to identify measures to eliminate inefficiencies and achieve savings in the provincial budget. Every department has been asked by the premier to generate ideas that will result in the equivalent of 30% in either revenue increases or expenditure reduction.

Our fiscal situation is indeed a grave one. At \$3 billion per year, Health and Community Services is the most expensive item in the provincial budget. A potential reduction of 30% is the equivalent of about \$900 million.

Last summer we asked for your input on how to achieve health system sustainability in light of the province's fiscal challenges. We received many useful ideas, which we presented to the provincial government. Since then, the magnitude has grown and more physician input is needed.

Government's new renewal initiative will result in difficult choices that will inevitably affect the way we deliver services to patients. But it also presents an opportunity for physicians to show strong leadership in shaping a high quality health system for the future. Rather than wait for top-down decisions to be imposed upon us, we intend to make sure that doctors are at the forefront of building a stronger and higher quality health care system.

To facilitate physician input, the NLMA will launch a second, more in-depth consultation with members later this month. Just as government is challenging its citizens to identify measures to find savings, we will challenge our members to develop solutions.


We will begin this process by conducting an online survey of all physicians in the province followed by four regional member town halls in St. John's, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Corner Brook and Gander. We also plan to facilitate a patient panel that will give people an opportunity to define their challenges and provide advice on how they can be addressed. NLMA will consolidate this feedback and develop recommendations to help guide the provincial government through its renewal process.

The NLMA process will allow doctors to think about province-wide solutions and generate recommendations from a physician perspective. We will challenge members to think about what services we need, how services should be delivered and where services should be located. We will also take a critical look at ourselves and think about what changes we can make as a profession for the benefit of the system.

As patient advocates we have a professional obligation to engage in a meaningful way, even if the issues are contentious and the solutions are unpopular. We must be guided by evidence and best practice so that as a profession we are socially accountable.

I ask that you consider participating in this process because it is critical that physicians are actively involved in finding solutions. Details on the timing of our activities and how you can participate will be sent to you in the coming days.

Sincerely,

  
Jonathan Greenland, MD, FRCP  
President



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