
President's Letter

January 21, 2015

Update on Premier's Summit on Health Care



Wendy Graham, MD, CCFP
President

Dear Colleagues:

In this letter I want to inform you about the Premier's Summit on Health Care and where we think the primary health care reform process might be heading.

The summit was held on Wednesday, January 14, 2015. I was accompanied from the NLMA by Executive Director Robert Thompson and Associate Executive Director Lynn Barter. The government invited over 250 people to attend the summit from various health professions, advocacy groups, regional health authorities, plus a group of citizens. The audience included at least 20 physicians from various parts of the province.

The government's stated purpose in holding this consultation was to seek ideas and solutions that government can put into action regarding changes to primary health care in the province, including a focus on mental health and addictions. The NLMA was very pleased with this focus given that we have been consistently advocating for over a year that reforms are needed in the primary health care system. Our members are seeking a better coordinated and collaborative system in which higher quality care can be delivered and provider-satisfaction improved.

Summaries of the discussions can be found on the Summit web page (<http://www.health.gov.nl.ca/summit/#results>).

My assessment of the summit is that government appears to be genuinely committed to a reform process but it is still unclear what shape the reforms will take. Assembling such a large group of health care stakeholders creates an expectation that requires meaningful follow-up. NLMA will continue to seek government action in several ways.

The NLMA is represented on the Primary Health Care Advisory Committee which has been charged with reviewing the ideas raised at the summit and recommending a framework for primary health care renewal. New initiatives in primary health care are also a theme in the negotiation of a new *Memorandum of Agreement*. Finally we are also participating in the evaluation of a new Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system, and negotiating an agreement on how the EMR will be governed. A functional and widely-adopted EMR is the critical infrastructure on which to achieve primary health care reform.

Many people are exhausted by the efforts over two decades to achieve reform and feel that this is yet another cycle of talk with low probability of action. The NLMA is taking an optimistic stance. Our members are thirsty for reform, they have many ideas, and will show leadership in helping change succeed.

I would value your feedback on this process as we pursue the reform process.

Regards,



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