

President's Letter

April 3, 2019



Tracey Bridger
MD, FRCP(C)
President

Update on academic representation; GFT compensation

Dear Colleagues:

Representation for Academic Physicians

Late in 2018, the NLMA advised Memorial University of its intention to negotiate a binding agreement for academic physicians that will outline the compensation, benefits and other workplace matters that have to date been addressed in individual contracts. Academic physicians include those with full-time positions, as well as those who perform specific tasks for the Faculty for stipends and those provide teaching services without compensation.

Recent experience has shown that without collective representation, academic physicians are in a weak position to protect their interests. They are the only group in Memorial University without collective representation. Memorial's response was to decline to negotiate with the NLMA.

In February, we held an open meeting with members in which we discussed how to respond to the University's position. The feedback was overwhelmingly in favour of continuing to seek full representation and a group agreement.

On March 26, we met with the Dean of Medicine to review these issues and seek a positive path forward. The University has not changed its position, but it is willing to meet again to continue a dialogue. We expect such a meeting in late May.

We are still unclear as to why the University is declining to negotiate. The statement from Memorial that the NLMA is not a union is not a valid reason because both the Government and WorkplaceNL have negotiated agreements with the NLMA, and many medical associations across Canada are involved in academic compensation arrangements. Furthermore, there are multiple examples of universities across Canada where compensation and benefits are contained in agreements with non-union faculty associations. We are hopeful that the University will agree to work together with the NLMA in order to come up with a model that works for all academic physicians.

The NLMA continues to organize the Academic Physicians Section and in the coming weeks we will circulate a call for nominations for an Executive Committee.

GFT Compensation

The NLMA has filed a Statement of Claim in the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador against the Government and Eastern Health, seeking, among other things, a declaration that the Government breached the Memorandum of Agreement when it unilaterally reduced the payment in lieu of benefits for "fixed fee" GFTs from 14% to 5%.

We had asked the Government to pursue a resolution of this matter through discussions, or dispute resolution, but they refused both avenues. Therefore, we had no choice but to seek redress from the Courts.

Our goal is to obtain retroactive payments to eliminate the losses incurred by affected physicians, and to reinstate the payment in lieu of benefits to the full 14%. If the Government wishes to seek changes it must negotiate such arrangements, not act outside the established MOA.

Sincerely,

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

Tracey Bridger, M.D., FRCP(C)
President