

President's Letter

November 25, 2020



Lynette Powell, MD
President

Government confirms Negotiations will start in November

Dear Colleagues,

In September, the NLMA advised members that we met with Premier Furey and Minister Haggie to discuss key issues facing physicians and the health care system. We advised the Premier that government's inability to address our outstanding contract has allowed our recruitment and retention efforts to languish. Since that meeting the government committed to a start date for negotiations in November.

I am pleased to report that after this long delay, we will finally be heading back to the negotiating table for an initial meeting on November 30.

This fall, I met with physicians from across the province as part of the virtual President's Tour. The number one problem identified by doctors in all communities was the inability to recruit new physicians, particularly in rural areas, and retain them for the long-term. Your input has significantly shaped our negotiating goals.

Ideally, the recruitment of our own medical graduates should meet most of the needs of our population. Unfortunately, in many disciplines, Newfoundland and Labrador is simply not competitive in the national physician labour market

According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), this province has the worst record in the country for holding on to its own medical graduates, whether they pursue family medicine or another specialty. We have also struggled to recruit a meaningful number of physicians from other provinces, and new licensing requirements are now making it harder to recruit international doctors. Due to the pressures of turnover and vacancies, physician recruitment activities are driven by the need to fill immediate gaps rather than forward planning.

This is not just a physician problem. Ultimately, it is our patients who bear the burden of these shortages.

Earlier today, I held a press conference to announce the start of NLMA negotiations. We explained that if the provincial government does not do a better job of recruiting doctors, it will have dramatic impacts on access and quality of health care in this province.

My message to the public was that things need to change, and the negotiating table is where this can happen. A new contract represents an opportunity to bring some stability to our eroding medical services.

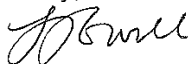
Our goal is a fair and competitive contract that will enable Newfoundland and Labrador to attract a larger share of MUN graduates, other Canadian graduates, as well as international graduates.

We understand and support a sustainable health system, and the NLMA will work with the Government in recognition of its financial circumstances. However, a sustainable health system must be able to attract and retain the right number of doctors. We cannot afford to keep training our doctors to be hired in other provinces. We need them here to fill the worsening gaps.

We believe there is a way forward that balances the needs of the provincial government with the needs of physicians because, ultimately, these are the needs of every Newfoundlander and Labradorian – a strong, accessible and responsive health care system.

I look forward to sharing our progress with you again in the future as negotiations get underway.

Sincerely,



Lynette Powell, MD
President



**Newfoundland &
Labrador Medical
Association**
164 MacDonald Dr.
St. John's, NL
A1A 4B3
(709) 726-7424
Or 1-800-563-2003
Fax: (709) 726-7525
www.nlma.nl.ca
president@nlma.nl.ca