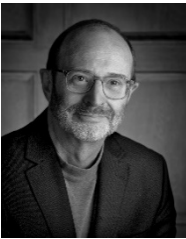


President's Letter

November 7, 2023



Gerard Farrell, MD

NLMA and government begin negotiations

Dear colleagues:

I am pleased to report that on Monday, the negotiations teams of the NLMA and the government met to officially begin the next round of bargaining. The NLMA initially gave notice to trigger negotiations on June 1, 2023. This was followed by an introductory meeting with the provincial government on June 23 to discuss procedural matters. During our first negotiations meeting yesterday, both parties tabled our lists of issues. The session was cordial and productive.

The previous MOA was signed in May 2022 and expired on September 30, 2023. In preparation for the next round, the Board of Directors began discussions in April on themes and objectives for the new MOA. Throughout the spring, we surveyed members and invited all specialty sections, sub-specialties, APP groups, and any other group with a common interest, to provide written submissions for negotiations. We also looked at feedback received from members over the last two years during President's Tours, MOA meetings and section meetings. This feedback was used to inform our negotiations mandate, which was signed off by the Board of Directors over the summer.

Based on member feedback, the Board made the strategic decision to move from Atlantic Parity to National Parity as the benchmark required to address the province's recruitment and retention challenges. The need for a better methodology for measuring competitiveness is critical given the current crisis in our health care system, physician shortages across Canada, the momentum towards national licensure and the recruitment of NL physicians by other provinces. To assist with this process, the NLMA commissioned Deloitte to develop an objective methodology for calculating national competitiveness. Multiple disciplines were engaged during the early stages of Deloitte's research, and NLMA will reconnect with members to get their feedback on the new approach prior to tabling these comparisons with the government.

I am also pleased to report that the parties are exploring a new, collaborative approach to bargaining known as "interest-based negotiations". This approach, which has been used effectively by several other provincial and territorial medical associations, intends to address issues by working together on mutually agreed solutions. It differs from positional bargaining, where each side tables fully developed negotiations proposals at the outset and is inherently adversarial by nature.

The government's negotiations team includes officials from the Department of Health and Community Services and the Treasury Board Secretariat. The Chief Negotiator for the NLMA, as reported in a previous President's Letter, is Halifax-based lawyer Ron Pink. The Association has also retained our former Executive Director Robert Thompson to assist our negotiations team with project coordination.

While this will be the first time that NLMA has access to binding arbitration as a dispute settlement mechanism, both parties are committed to reaching a strong deal at the negotiations table. At the end of the day, this contract will play a crucial role in the province's ability to recruit and retain the right number of physicians to meet the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We will continue to update members as new developments emerge from the negotiations table.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gerard Farrell".

Gerard Farrell
President

A stylized handwritten signature in black ink.

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