



**NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**

**Government acting outside NLMA's contract will lead to further instability
in the health care system**

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St. John's, NL – The NLMA is extremely concerned about the provincial government's announcement of \$75,000 for salaried family physicians working in family care teams, and its potential to add further instability to the health care system.

"We recognize that the government is struggling to attract physicians to join family care teams. An Access to Information Request reported on by *The Telegram* last month showed that only four of the province's family care teams were operating at fully capacity due to human resource shortages," said NLMA President Dr. Steve Major.

"The problem is the provincial government's announcement today is a contravention of its contract with the NLMA, which is the sole negotiator for all physicians on compensation matters. Our contract covers salary scales and retention incentives for all classes of physicians. The only exception is recruitment incentives for doctors not currently employed in the health system," explained Dr. Major.

"The new \$75,000 payment to salaried physicians in family care teams is not a recruitment incentive, it is a one-year raise in pay. It is available to all doctors currently employed by NLHS who are already working in a family care team, as well as those who join a family care team before the end of the year. This elevates the pay for salaried family physicians in this one practice setting, but not for those in the many other important settings in the health care system."

Salaried family physicians work in multiple settings, including hospitals and emergency departments, long-term care and mental health and addictions to name a few. The increase in payment announced today is not being offered to salaried doctors in those settings. Nor does it provide an incentive for fee-for-service or blended capitation family physicians who want to join family care teams.

"Our concern is that the government's announcement will cause family physicians working in other areas of the system to leave their practices in favour of a salaried job in a family care team without any net gain for the patients of the province. This is essentially robbing Peter to pay Paul and may result in harm to patients if the government recruits family doctors away from their current roles," said Dr. Major.

The NLMA agrees that many classes of physicians need more competitive compensation to solve the shortages that exist in the province. This is why the Association has been at the negotiating table with the provincial government since June 2023 to reach a new agreement, which has been a difficult and protracted process. The government consulted the NLMA in June about an earlier version of a family care team incentive, to which the Association provided similar feedback. The NLMA advised the government that it should take this idea to the negotiating table and not unilaterally create another payment inequity.

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“We are in negotiations for all physicians in the province, and the government's unilateral action today is a major sign of disrespect for the NLMA and physicians in general by focusing on this one area of family medicine,” said Dr. Major.

“This is not part of a comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy. Every site that has equal needs and equal recruitment challenges must be treated fairly. The government must pay all family physician jobs competitively and to a reasonable standard. Unfortunately, the new payment announced today values family physicians differently and tells doctors who do not work in family care teams that they are not worth as much.”

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