

President's Letter

January 18, 2021



Lynette Powell, MD
President

Update on the Status of MOA Negotiations and Election-related Advocacy

Dear Colleagues,

The NLMA is currently in negotiations for a new Memorandum of Agreement with the provincial government. Three meetings have been held to date, with the latest one being on January 13-14. The provincial election will require a temporary delay in these talks, and we will resume after the campaign period. I can tell you that to date, discussions have been constructive, and both parties are in the process of tabling proposals. Our proposals have broad applicability to all specialties across the province.

Some members have asked me why the NLMA was not among the unions that signed agreements with the government in the days before the election call. There are several reasons. These groups signed onto a similar template that had already been negotiated a year ago with other unions. Our agreement is significantly different than the union template because we are negotiating a contract for professional services that apply to self-employed physicians, alternate payment plans and salaried physicians. The union template addresses very few issues and does not apply to the NLMA. Furthermore, our agreement not only seeks to improve physician recruitment and retention, but also to make important changes that will put the health care system on a better course. Yes, the NLMA has been waiting a long time for a new agreement, and we are frustrated, but the process has been well-started and will unfold to completion in the coming months.

As always during contract negotiations, we have committed to each other that we will not negotiate in public. However, many aspects of normal business with government will continue. For example, we continue to advocate on behalf of physicians regarding audit issues, including the difficulties many specialists are having with the government's interpretation of the preamble regarding follow-up assessments.

We will also launch an election-related advocacy campaign to highlight issues affecting patients. Earlier today, I sent a letter to each party leader asking them to improve patient access to care if elected Premier. I also held a press conference to support our advocacy efforts to put health care on each party's political agenda.

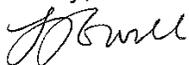
We have the fastest aging population in the country and the highest rates of chronic disease. When these patients do not have access to timely care, they are at greater risk of poor health outcomes. For the thousands without a family doctor, they are forced to rely on emergency rooms for primary care, which is an inappropriate use of hospital resources. Others must rely on walk-in clinics and call-in services that do not offer the same continuity.

Today, we called on the three party leaders to commit to helping the 90,000 residents of the province who do not have a family doctor or a primary health care team. This is a key strategic issue for the NLMA that needs broad political commitment. We will also be highlighting the recruitment and retention problems in many specialties, and the over-taxed hospital system.

To coincide with our election advocacy, we are also launching an advertising campaign, which includes TV, print, radio and social media ads. The NLMA will publish responses to our letter from the party leaders and share them with you as they are received. A copy of our news release, my letter to the party leaders and the NLMA's TV ad is available [here](#).

Many thanks for the feedback that we receive from members. As always, I appreciate receiving your views so that our work can remain relevant to your needs.

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