



**NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR  
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**

**NLMA suspends contract negotiations with government**

**For immediate release – October 14, 2021**

**St. John's, NL – St. John's, NL** – The Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association (NLMA) has provided written notice to the provincial government that it is immediately suspending contract negotiations to consult with its members.

Health Minister John Haggie and Finance Minister Siobhan Coady have told the NLMA unequivocally that the provincial government will make zero new investment in physician services to help improve the province's physician recruitment and retention problem.

Furthermore, last month the Department of Health advised the NLMA that it intends to change the *Medical Act, 2011* legislation to remove the requirement that physicians must be members of the NLMA.

“To advance this type of divide and conquer tactic in the middle of our negotiations is unethical and cannot be tolerated,” says NLMA President Dr. Susan MacDonald.

Physicians of the province have been without a contract for more than four years. Negotiations for a new contract began ten months ago; however, since that time the government has failed to produce any proposals to address the recruitment and retention problems of physicians, the family doctor shortage, or the plight of 99,000 patients without a family doctor.

“Family medicine is facing shortages in every region of the province and other specialties are suffering the strain of an under-resourced, over-loaded health system which fails to attract new doctors. Too many members are burning out due to workforce vacancies and an inappropriate on-call burden that is unsustainable and hampering recruitment efforts,” says Dr. MacDonald.

“The NLMA has put forward proposals at the negotiations table to solve these longstanding problems. Unfortunately, the government has flatly rejected them. After years of delays and months of inaction at the negotiations table, it is clear to us that government has no intention of addressing the core problems in the recruitment and retention crisis,” she added.

The NLMA has made no secret of the fact that to attract new doctors to the province, Newfoundland and Labrador must at least be competitive with the other Atlantic Provinces. Since the NLMA's contract expired four years ago, the majority of specialties have fallen below the Atlantic average. Newfoundland and Labrador's family physicians are the lowest paid in the country.

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“Attracting new doctors to fill vacancies in these specialties requires serious effort and investment. However, Minister Haggie and Minister Coady have made it clear to us that the provincial government has no intention of being competitive with the other Atlantic Provinces, let alone the rest of Canada. The ministers are sending a clear message to any doctor thinking about coming to Newfoundland and Labrador to work, and any doctor working here now,” says Dr. MacDonald.

“The government’s failure to compete with the other Atlantic Provinces means we will not see an end to our current physician shortage or the exodus of our medical graduates,” she added.

The NLMA is launching a series of consultations with its members to discuss the government’s negotiations proposals and next steps to break this impasse.

“After our consultations we will inform the government and the public about the course we will pursue in the interests of our patients.”

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