



NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

NLMA will not return to negotiating table unless government gets serious about recruitment and retention

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St. John's, NL – Today, the NLMA called on the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to get serious about recruitment and retention of physicians and the plight of 99,000 patients without family doctors. The government must make a meaningful improvement in its proposals to the NLMA before negotiations can resume. If the government fails to do so, the NLMA will conduct a formal vote on November 4th to accept or reject the government's offer.

Physicians of the province have been without a contract for more than four years. Negotiations for a new contract began ten months ago; however, the government has made no substantial proposals and declared it will make zero investment in the physician services budget. With no room to negotiate within a zero envelope, the NLMA advised the public it was suspending negotiations and holding town halls with members in each region of the province from October 19-21.

An overwhelming number of physicians support the NLMA's approach. A member poll conducted during the town hall meetings revealed that 99% supported the NLMA's decision to suspend negotiations with government. A second member poll found that 94% want the NLMA to stay away from negotiations unless the government commits to "meaningful improvement".

"Physicians sent a resounding message that these negotiations must result in bold solutions," says NLMA President Dr. Susan MacDonald, "not just more of the status quo which is wrecking our health system."

"Our members demonstrated a strong sense of solidarity with their patients during our town hall meetings. Despite the government's attempt to weaken the NLMA by changing the *Medical Act*, doctors will continue to put their patients first and seek improvements to the health system that will attract doctors to work here," she added.

During the town hall meetings, doctors spoke about the difficulty to fill vacant positions and how the government's lack of respect for doctors was negatively affecting morale.

The NLMA maintains that to attract new doctors to the province, Newfoundland and Labrador must at least be competitive with the other Atlantic Provinces. Government and the NLMA have used the Atlantic Parity formula for every contract negotiation for nearly 20 years. It calculates the gaps between doctors in this province and the other Atlantic Provinces. The NLMA also maintains that to entice medical graduates to choose family medicine in this province, the government must also commit to a new payment model that enables team-based care and moves away from the current fee-for-service model.

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