



NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

NLMA responds to misleading statements from the Minister of Health

For immediate release – July 30, 2020

On Wednesday, the NLMA [informed the media](#) that our negotiations with government have been delayed for three years and that government has not yet set a date for talks to begin. Yesterday, Health Minister John Haggie [responded to the media](#) by saying that his Department is in negotiations with the NLMA, but that he cannot discuss these issues because he does not negotiate in public. These statements from the Minister of Health are false.

The NLMA's contract negotiations have not started. The last time this agreement was negotiated was for the 2013-2017 period. There have been no negotiations since. The NLMA has repeatedly and publicly called on the Minister of Health to start negotiations to no avail.

The contract with doctors is the mechanism through which we can contribute to sustainability in the health care system and implement policies that will lead to changes and improvements in the delivery of care to our patients. However, the NLMA believes this Minister of Health has no intention of negotiating in good faith with physicians of the province.

Last month, the NLMA approached the Minister with a proposal to extend the physician contract until next March, much like the contract extensions recently negotiated with NAPE and the Nurses Union. This proposal was ignored.

Minister Haggie also said that his officials have met with the NLMA on "negotiation pieces" in recent days. This is another misleading statement. The topics of these meetings are entirely different from contract negotiations. There has been no meaningful negotiation on multiple issues the NLMA has raised with the Minister, and he knows the difference.

This includes the NLMA's proposed solutions to address the large number of patients without a family doctor, our recommendations for improving the 811 walk-in service, the need for primary care teams that integrate registered nurses and nurse practitioners in physician practices, our recommendations for health system restructuring, our recommendations for primary care reform, our family physician human resource forecast, our proposals for a new payment model that encourages comprehensive care and more time with patients, as well as our recommendations for a Virtual Care Strategy for the province.

The Minister of Health consistently ignores important advice from doctors and continues to mislead the public with misdirection and confusing statements about our contract negotiations. We call on the new Premier to immediately address the issues in the Department of Health and to set a higher standard for the relationship between the Minister of Health and the NLMA.

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