



*april 18
presented &
noted*

Dr. Ken Jenkins
Chair, Service Coverage Committee
c/o Western Health Care Corporation
P.O. Box 1005
Corner Brook, NL A2H 6J7

Dear Ken:

I'm writing in follow up to a request for feedback dated March 24, 2005, from the Physician Services Liaison Committee in follow up to a presentation they received on March 15, 2005, concerning Pathology in this Province.

I will try to capture the comments I made at the April 14, 2005, meeting of Medical Directors which arose out of the details of the presentation referenced and supplemental information on a matter I received.

Recruitment and retention of Pathologists within this organization has proved to be challenging. We've lost a number of physicians over the past few years to retirement and to other jurisdictions across the country. Currently we have two vacant positions and three more retirements scheduled over the next year or so.

We have had several applications for the two vacant positions, but only one of these applicants still remains interested, and that is dependent on a position for his spouse. Other applicants felt that our equipment was good, the range of service offered in this academic Health Sciences Centre was another positive factor, but the compensation arrangements here were disappointing compared to other jurisdictions these individuals are looking at. Information supplied on a recently released national physician survey sponsored by the College of Family Physicians of Canada, the Canadian Medical Association, and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada indicate that in a number of disciplines including Pathology there is a imminent retirement rate of over 10% expected. This will make the situation even more difficult. In the past, we've been able to recruit a goodly number of the graduates of the Residency Training Program in Pathology at Memorial University School of Medicine. Currently, however, all our trainees are foreign medical graduates who have family connections in other areas of the country and, thus, may not be amenable to being recruited here, especially when opportunities are available in this discipline all across the country.

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Included in the information I have appended is results of the annual survey of Professional Income for Pathologists from the Canadian Association of Pathology newsletter. The reported incomes for Newfoundland at \$184,000 seem compatible with the current data. This is in contrast with the average Canadian income average of \$261,000. In Atlantic Canada, the compensation levels are \$201,000 for New Brunswick, \$203,000 for Prince Edward Island, and \$248,000 for the Province of Nova Scotia. Some provinces like Alberta and British Colombia are over \$100,000 ahead of the Pathologists here in reported incomes.

Given all this information, a two-pronged approach is necessary when one considers the retirements that will be occurring soon, the degree of interest in looking at the Discipline of Pathology as career for our graduates of Memorial University, and the competition with other provinces this Province will have in attracting physicians.

1. Develop a proactive campaign within the Medical School at Memorial University aimed at promoting careers for physicians in the Discipline of Pathology. This should be combined with a financial assistance package that would provide financial assistance to individuals who enter the Pathology Residency Program starting in the first year and requiring a return-in-service commitment to the Province.
2. Pathologists are paid on a salaried arrangement, and there is no alternative to practice on a fee-for-service approach. The current compensation package for Pathologists in this Province should be reviewed now and consideration be given to adjusting the package consistent with the current round of negotiations with the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association which are scheduled to take place in the near future. As a minimum, the package for Pathologists in this Province should be adjusted to a package consistent with the average compensation in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia as a starting point.

As a support service to other clinical disciplines, any major disruptions in Pathology service in this Province will affect the delivery of services in some of the other programs. Given the factors outlined above, we must take proactive action now if we are to prevent this scenario.

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I trust these comments and the attached documentation I have attached will be useful for our discussion of this in the next Service Coverage Committee meeting.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.J. Williams', written over a horizontal line.

R.J. WILLIAMS, M.D., M.P.H.
Vice-President, Medical Services and
Acting Chief Executive Officer

/dd

Enclosure