

Members' Forum
June 10, 2023 at 11:00 am
Digby Pines Golf Resort & Spa/Zoom
NOTES

Negotiations Update

Alana Patterson, Director, Physician Compensation and Practice Support and Chief Negotiator, presented a negotiations update. She explained that due to the confidential nature of negotiations, there is not much detail that can be shared about the contracts at this point, however she will share some updates on the negotiations process. Since the start of negotiations in early February, there have been 11 days at the full negotiating table, and 43 half-day sub-committee meetings. The discussions have been constructive and productive. Based on overwhelming member feedback, stabilizing office-based family medicine and improving the ability of the province to recruit and retain physicians have been a top priority for this negotiation. The remaining priorities are a subset of this.

The presentation covered the following items:

- Physicians' input
- Negotiating priorities
- Interest-based negotiation (IBN)
- Physicians at the table
- Current timeline

Ms. Patterson explained that unlike previous negotiations where a conventional approach was used, this time we engaged in an interest-based negotiations (IBN) process. An IBN is a defined negotiation process and methodology where two parties collaborate to find win-win solutions to shared interests and issues. This includes:

- Spending time understanding one another's challenges and interests;
- Brainstorming options/solutions; and
- Having a facilitator support the process.

Although it is not without risks, there are also significant benefits to IBN. It was the Board's view that the benefits far outweighed the risks, and that IBN presented the best opportunity to make meaningful headway on the long list of negotiating priorities. Alana shared that having now experienced IBN firsthand, we know now these benefits are true. There have been real discussions, opportunity for creative solutions to tackle complex system issues, a meaningful NSH and IWK voice at the table, and enhanced relationships.

She shared the tentative contract timeline that we are currently working toward, which will hopefully see ratification materials sent to physicians later this month followed by a virtual ratification tour. She

also shared the key deliverables for ratification, which will be centred around ensuring physicians feel informed and empowered to vote.

Ms. Patterson asked the delegation for their support as the process moves forward. She explained that the context within which we are negotiating and ratifying this agreement is a challenge. There are significant health system needs, health human resource needs, operational needs and process improvement needs. It is important to remember that addressing those needs is not within the scope of a compensation agreement. Regardless of what is secured in the physician compensation agreement, it is still only about compensation. It does not alone fix the system, although it is our hope that it will contribute to fixing the system. Much of what the system needs is beyond compensation changes. If the Board recommends an agreement for ratification by the membership, it should not be treated as a referendum on the system's performance.

She acknowledged and thanked physicians who made up the Master Agreement and C/AFP negotiating teams, as well as staff for their valuable contributions during this negotiation.

Questions/comments:

A member noted that when ratification time comes, it would be helpful to highlight the importance of relationship building with partners and the role that IBN has played in that regard. Members should understand the value in this.

- *Ms. Patterson agreed and added that building and strengthening those relationships will allow us to contribute to and achieve meaningful system change.*

A member inquired on whether partners at the Department of Health and Wellness and Nova Scotia Health will attend the virtual ratification tour in the spirit of collaboration.

- *Ms. Patterson shared that it is not part of our plans as they stand. This is not something that we have done before, so it will require some thoughtful discussion and consideration.*

A member thanked Ms. Patterson and the negotiating team for their hard work and acknowledged the difficulty with negotiating a contract in such a challenging health-care landscape.

A member inquired as to whether there is any consideration taken with regards to ethical investments at DNS, i.e., not investing in anything that is in direct opposition to the interests of public health.

- *Dr. Gerard Macdonald, Chair of the Audit Committee, explained that the Audit Committee has spent a lot of time over the past year revamping the association's investment policy with the assistance of an external advisor from Mercer. There are already restrictions in place on tobacco-related products and we have invested in some Fossil Free fuel funds. It is an iterative process, however, and we'll continue to review our investments every year.*

The meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.