Meeting

NMA changes name to reflect geographic reality

Lucian Blair

The recent annual meeting of the Newfoundland Medical Association (NMA) in Grand Falls will probably be the last gathering of the NMA. It’s not that the association is folding, though. Members simply passed a resolution calling for a new name — the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association.

Such a change requires government approval, since it entails altering the province’s Medical Act, but this is not expected to pose a problem. The new name should be in place by next year.

Several issues caused extensive debate among members gathered in the Arts and Culture Centre for the 3-day meeting. The most protracted discussion concerned a proposal that the NMA hire a private firm to conduct an in-depth study of fee disparities over the next year and that a report be presented at the 1990 annual meeting.

A second motion directed that the next and subsequent fee increases reflect any disparities documented in the study. Both resolutions carried.

Manpower shortages in rural areas also sparked considerable debate. Two motions — that the NMA meet with the Medical Students Society to talk about rural practice and that the association consider providing financial support to students wishing to pursue electives in rural Newfoundland — caused quite a stir.

What constitutes rural Newfoundland? some members wondered. “It starts at the Grand Falls overpass”, replied one. Some were concerned that the second resolution would mean an increase in membership fees. Both motions were referred back to the Council on Medical Education.

On the eve of the meeting, family physicians met to establish a General Practitioner Section, and its creation was duly sanctioned at the annual meeting. A number of CMA divisions already have such sections, which are deemed to provide GPs and FPs with more effective representation aimed at their particular needs and interests. Dr. Cliff Westby of Corner Brook was elected president of the new section.

The meeting followed Newfoundland’s recent provincial election and it was evident that, as one member noted, “the winds of change were blowing”. The retiring president, Dr. Neil Harvey, spoke of the good relationship the association is enjoying with the new Liberal government, and particularly with Health Minister Chris Decker. Harvey was succeeded as president by a St. John’s psychiatrist, Dr. Martin (“Ben”) Hogan.

Newfoundland doctor convinced he has Prior claim to CMA post

The selection of a CMA president is generally a sedate affair, but as far as at least one Newfoundland doctor is concerned, the race to be the province’s nominee for the CMA presidency is on in full force.

During the recent NMA annual meeting, Gander obstetrician–gynecologist David Prior studded the walls of the hotel where members were staying with campaign posters as he lobbied actively for the right to head the CMA in 1992. His sole opponent to date is the deputy speaker of the CMA General Council and former chairman of the CMA board, Dr. Ron Whelan of St. John’s.

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