

Can cope with resigning cancer docs: N.L. health minister

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Health Minister Ross Wiseman said his government will recruit new gynecologic oncologists if it needs to do so. (CBC)

Newfoundland and Labrador's health minister is not deeply troubled by threatened resignations of all the province's gynecologic oncologists.

Three specialists who treat women with cancers of the reproductive system have informed the Eastern Health regional authority that they intend to resign in October.

Doctors Cathy Popadiuk, Lesa Dawson and Patti Power, who have not yet commented publicly on their decision, have said that workloads are threatening patient safety. They also decided to leave for what has been described as a lack of respect in their workplace.

Health Minister Ross Wiseman, though, said he is not prepared to enter new negotiations involving a specific set of doctors, especially when the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association's master agreement expires next year.

"In April, we'll be talking about those as they surface," Wiseman said.

"We're not in a position to take, in the medical community, every single discipline and [deal] with unique circumstances and one-offs. [That's] the whole idea of having a collective agreement, for all bodies and all groups within that organization."

The Newfoundland and Labrador government announced in May a massive pay increase for pathologists, and medical and radiation oncologists.

The deal, which Wiseman said followed a special appeal from the NLMA about threatened resignations from specialists who treat breast cancer patients, angered the NLMA and other doctors, as it was unilaterally imposed and unfair to other specialists.

Meanwhile, Wiseman said Newfoundland and Labrador will recruit new gynecologic oncologists if Popadiuk, Dawson and Power leave the province.

Specialists hard to come by

NLMA president Dr. Elizabeth Callahan, though, said that will be difficult, as there are only 50 such specialists in the country, and only three new specialists are poised to enter the Canadian system this year.

Callahan said the government may have no choice but to fly patients with cervical, ovarian or other cancers out of the province for treatment.

Wiseman said the government is prepared for such a consequence.

"These are a variety of options that we are willing to explore."

The doctors and the NLMA say their concerns were brought to the government in March. However, Wiseman said government was not told about the gynecologic oncologists' complaints until a meeting in June, after the pay package was announced for other oncologists.

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[pickacause](#) wrote:Posted 2008/08/14

at 12:30 AM ETWhat Dream World is Minister Wiseman living in? If it were your wife,daughter or any female member of your family needed someone like the cancer specialist leaving.....what would you do? Quite possible you might have the money and resources to seek help elsewhere. Why not walk in the shoes of a woman fighting cervical cancer and wonder who will be here to help. All the doctors here now are on such a long waiting list ..Can you imagine it takes about 12 to 18 months to have a Bone Density Done? People are waiting for specific testing and get bumped due to emergencies, this is understandable, but what about the bumped person becomes the next emergency? If i needed a Catscan or MRI and they told me my appt was for 2:30 AM i would be so grateful just as long as it could be done.

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[geometro](#) wrote:Posted 2008/08/09

at 8:03 PM ETThey didnt throw money at the pathologists, they paid them for what they were almost worth.....they deserve more.....

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[masterwatch](#) wrote:Posted 2008/08/04

at 3:12 PM ETI could cope better with Wiseman's resignation.

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[sandipniauskas](#) wrote:Posted 2008/08/02

at 8:33 PM ETThe resignations of these 3 gynecologic oncologists should not be a surprize to anyone and most importantly why is in some media articles shock expressed? These are the questions that are not being asked.

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[power33](#) wrote:Posted 2008/07/31

at 4:57 PM ETWiseman said.

"We're not in a position to take, in the medical community, every single discipline and [deal] with unique circumstances and one-offs. [That's] the whole idea of having a collective agreement, for all bodies and all groups within that organization."

Is this not what they just did with pathologists, and medical and radiation oncologists?

Everybody and there dog knew this was going to happen when they decided to throw money at the pathologists and oncologists. If they didn't think this was going to happen we need some new blood in on that hill.

You can't just throw money at a group of specialist hoping to make a problem go away and not expect to open a Pandora's Box with the other specialized fields. This was a very abrupt short sited plan that wasn't thought threw at all.

The best yet was even the NLMA couldn't believe the money that got thrown at this group.

We are lucky today financially in this Province because of the oil money. This money will not last forever that is why it is called a nonrenewable resource. Instead of throwing huge amounts of money at Doctors that their association couldn't even comprehend and there might be a good chance that we won't be able to afford down the road. We need to seriously focus on having up to date equipment and new equipment that's out there that we don't even have for better diagnostic capabilities. This type of smart money spending will see us have up to date equipment to take care of us today and in the future.

I am not saying don't give the Specialist / Doctors any raises but tighten those purse strings a bit. Give raises that are within the normal range of raises that we can sustain down the road. Stay away from raises that at least 60% of the population doesn't make in a year. These doctors were here working for their respective salaries before our government threw the big bucks at them for a reason "Newfoundland is a beautiful place to live and raise a family" Now all you managed to do is drive a wedge between the different disciplines'!!! I guess this is too late now though because you already threw a HUGE amount of money at one group hoping that it would quite the public outcry on the current inquiry.

We the Newfoundlanders of today are seeing the crumbling of our health care system unfold in front of us. God help any one that needs medical attention...

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