

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

doctors
of bc



May 6, 2024

Working for you to help resolve ER issues

Dear Colleagues,

I know times are challenging within the profession right now. Clinics across the province are overburdened, acute care is understaffed, relationships with health authorities can be trying, and too many of us feel underappreciated and overworked. I want you to know that Doctors of BC, as your advocate, is working hard to address these challenges. Most acutely, we are busy working with physician groups and health authorities to support and improve conditions in the province's emergency departments.

Emergency departments across the province are feeling the pain. Nearly every week a story is posted on local or provincial media platforms about ED closures – planned or otherwise, diversions, overcrowding, hallway medicine, lack of ED and other hospital staff including physicians, which makes for a stressful and frustrating experience for physicians causing true moral distress and a miserable and frightening experience for patients.

Doctors of BC has been actively representing various ED groups for quite some time to ameliorate the problems. It is slow going, and not all smooth sailing. Our talks with the government and health authorities around the province continue. I would like to give you an update on where we stand.

Rural ERs

For the past six months we have been actively supporting about a dozen rural EDs in local contract negotiations with their health authorities and the HEABC. Over recent weeks we have been focused on negotiating contract language that address physicians' interests at particular sites that we expect can apply across multiple sites. We have found that not only is there a need to educate health authorities as to the practical challenges that rural EDs face in order to address them, but there is also a need to ensure doctors' voices are amplified and heard. We are beginning to see movement that we hope will result in more attractive contract offers being made available across rural EDs in the coming weeks.

We are also collaborating on the development of a provincial emergency locum program – specifically for sites in crisis. The locum program has been placing locum physicians who have

signed up to the locum program in EDs with the greatest need, and it seems to be helping meet the requirements of physicians, but we know we still have a long way to go.

Urban ERs

Urban ERs face a different set of issues, and we are still working on finding solutions. We continue to work with ER doctors in these sites who are very frustrated. We understand that some Emergency Physicians are considering taking steps such as resigning based on contract disputes, or temporarily halting some duties, among others. To help relieve the pressure on EDs, Doctors of BC representatives are actively involved across the province supporting various physician groups to improve access to inpatient care services. Unfortunately, when it comes to capacity within the physician workforce in hospitals, there just isn't a simple solution. What we do know is that many of you are overworked, overburdened, and being placed in difficult situations.

Solving these problems takes everyone working towards the same goal. With summer approaching, along with the inevitable forest fires influencing the ability to provide care and for people to travel, things will likely get more difficult. While Doctors of BC continues to advocate for you at regional and provincial tables, I am asking that all physician groups providing inpatient care within hospitals talk with one another, look for solutions and come to agreement on the best way to keep our ERs flowing so that patients get the care they need. Doctors of BC is happy to work with your MSA to help begin these discussions. The problems in the ED don't start and end in the ED. Your MSA or facility engagement process provides an opportunity for physician groups to work together to find ways to help each other in these difficult situations. We can try to make things better, together... and I know we can.

I realize that physicians across the province are feeling increasing stress and that your resilience is being tested. Please know Doctors of BC is advocating for you. The [Regional Advocate and Advisor](#) in your health authority, [Engagement Partners](#), your own Medical Staff Associations, and [Doctors of BC Negotiators](#), are all available to advise and support members who have issues to raise and recommendations to make to health authorities. And as always, if you feel you are having issues with your mental health, stress at work, or have concern for colleagues, please reach out to the confidential [Physician Health Program](#) for assistance.

Please feel free to reach out to me directly at president@doctorsofbc.ca with your thoughts. I am also here for you.

With appreciation and gratitude,

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