

# The President's Letter

Dr. Christopher J.(Chip) Doig



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*In this letter:*

- *With the trilateral agreement, a separate Physician Services Budget is the top priority; value of fees and uncertainty about the future of the agreement are next.*
- *ARPs and AARPs are the No. 2 priority for specialists.*
- *Funding for computerizing physician offices is No. 1 for family physicians.*
- *AMA will cease distributing paper copies of the President's Letter.*

Dear Member:

## Survey feedback

Feedback to the *President's Letter* and surveys are two means by which the Alberta Medical Association (AMA) seeks to understand membership concerns and issues. I would like to thank those who completed the most recent, quarterly tracking survey that focused on priorities for the AMA in four areas:

- The trilateral agreement
- Shortages of physicians and others in the health care system
- Patient care
- Alberta Health Services (AHS)

Regarding the trilateral agreement, and given a choice of six items and asked to select the top two, the respondents said:

- No. 1 is keeping the Physician Services Budget separate from AHS, with specialists more adamant than family physicians.
- The next two priorities are the value of our fees and addressing the huge uncertainty with the pending end of the master agreement on March 31, 2011. For example, what will happen to alternate relationship plans (ARPs) and academic alternate relationship plans (AARPs)?

- ARPs and AARPs were the fourth priority overall, but ranked No. 2 among specialists.
- Funding for computerizing physician offices was fifth overall, but the No. 1 priority for family physicians.
- Expanding the primary care networks was sixth overall.

In the survey we offered five choices on shortages in the health care system. The first priority – by nine percentage points – was shortages of physicians by city, town or zone. Calgary physicians felt much more strongly than others.

Next were shortages of physicians in their own fields of practice; family physicians were at 54%, specialists at 36%. Third were the shortages of allied health providers; specialists (44%) felt much more strongly than family physicians (34%).

The two other options in this section were shortages of AHS facilities and equipment and shortages of AHS support staff. Specialists were more concerned than family physicians about these AHS shortages.

As for the public, the AMA's polling reflects what the media is reporting – waiting times in the ER and for surgery, shortages of doctors, and lack of access to family physicians. Everything else pales by comparison.

Recruitment and retention of physicians are always either front-and-centre or just-below the radar screen:

- In the AMA's ongoing dealings with government
- In negotiations
- As a priority of the public
- In the media

### **An (almost) paperless *President's Letter***

Beginning this month the AMA will cease distributing paper copies of each *President's Letter* with the AMA's regular monthly mailing to members.

Instead, the monthly mailing will include a summary sheet of all *President's Letters* distributed that month with the date, subject, bulleted summary that appears at the beginning of each letter, and the website link for full versions of all letters.

Up to now the *President's Letter*, the AMA's signature communications vehicle, has been emailed and paper copies have also been distributed to all members. Currently, over 9,000 members receive the *President's Letter*, *MD Scope* and *Section News* via email. Members who do not receive *MD Scope* electronically are provided a headline-style summary in the AMA's monthly mailing; *Section News* is only electronic.

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Membership engagement and communications, which are intertwined, are high priorities for the AMA! In order to be relevant to you, we need to know what your issues, aspirations and expectations are; and we need to inform you about what and how the AMA is representing you with government, AHS, other stakeholders, media and the public.

Your emails and letters are always welcome, and I would also encourage you to contact Representative Forum delegates and section leaders (contact information is available on the AMA website at <http://www.albertadoctors.org/InsideAMA/RFDelegates> and <http://www.albertadoctors.org/InsideAMA/Sections>).

Yours truly,

Christopher J. (Chip) Doig, MD, MSc, FRCPC  
President