



July 24, 2020

Dear Family Physicians,

I never thought our relationship with Government could become so strained; that I would see such unbelievable actions or hear such blatant untruths, by Government against physicians; or that I would feel so disrespected as a physician.

Months ago, SFM spearheaded the Family Medicine Task Force and with the help of the AMA support team, we delivered a great deal of material to support family physicians in their advocacy efforts. We also hosted virtual town halls to hear from our members. Grassroots groups including the Rural Sustainability Group joined our efforts and were successful in having Government walk back recently implemented proposals impacting rural practice. During all this, we also managed to navigate the challenges of COVID-19 and collaborate with the AMA in supporting physicians through this unprecedented time.

We've recently joined forces with the Specialty Care Task Force to form the Joint Task Force and continue this advocacy work. To say that we've endured, and continue to endure, tumultuous times, is an understatement. We are still far from reaching a successful conclusion.

As most of you are already aware from Dr. Christine Molnar's [July 20 Presidents Letter](#), the AMA held a special RF on July 18. The main purpose was to gauge the membership's views, through their RF delegates, towards Government. In the [July 21 Presidents Letter](#) Dr. Molnar provided more information and that by an overwhelming majority RF took the step of requesting a [Confidence Vote Referendum](#) on the Minister of Health.

AMA members are being asked to [vote](#) – yes or no – if they have confidence in the Minister of Health and his ability to work with us going forward. This vote will determine our next steps as an organization. I strongly encourage all our members to vote and let their voice be heard. Government has pushed us to the point where we no longer have a choice and need to stand up for ourselves, our profession and our patients. Voting ends at 11pm on July 28. If you have not yet done so, please vote.

This week, just as our members were being asked to vote on their confidence in Minister Shandro, we also evidenced a group of physicians publicly declare they were negotiating directly with Government and they were unhappy with the way the AMA had represented them, which is the exact opposite of the feedback we have been receiving from our members. Indeed, feedback from members indicates appreciation for the AMA's representation and advocacy. The Section of Rural Medicine President, Dr. Ed Aasman, recently wrote a [letter to the Eye Physicians and Surgeons Association of Alberta](#) regarding how they misleadingly represented rural physicians. As usual, Ed has done a wonderful job of capturing the feelings of his section members and many others.

Virtual codes remain a concern and this is something that the Community Supports Working Group continues to address. As I write this, I'm reminded of what I shared in the [March 24 SFM Bulletin](#) that "these new codes do not include all of what we wanted, the final decisions are controlled by AH. These additions certainly go a long way to bridging the gap, but work needs to continue." Rest assured, we have not stopped working on this matter.

The SFM continues its advocacy efforts on behalf of family medicine through the amalgamated (family medicine and specialty care) Joint Task Force. The JTF shared their [first update](#) with all members on July 23. It provides an at-a-glance summary of items that may be of interest to physicians. If you haven't already had an opportunity to read it, I encourage you to take a few minutes to review.

I wanted to end this bulletin on a positive note. The Section of Family Medicine is excited to announce Dr. Dianne Brox and Dr. Gerry Prince as the recipients of the section's Outstanding Service Award. This award recognizes physicians that have made tremendous contributions in the representation of family physicians in Alberta. Dr. Dianne Brox from Edmonton and Dr. Gerry Prince from Medicine Hat have both served the section for numerous decades and have been tremendous advocates for family medicine and are very deserving recipients. They will be presented their awards at the virtual AGM in September. Congratulations to both Dianne and Gerry and sincere thanks for all you have done, and continue to do, for family medicine.

Best regards,



Dr. Craig Hodgson
President, AMA Section of Family Medicine



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