

# LEADING TOGETHER

Doctors' prescription for improving  
PEI's health-care system

HEALTH POLICY STATEMENT  
SPRING 2019

# DOCTORS' PRESCRIPTION FOR IMPROVING PEI'S HEALTH-CARE SYSTEM

*MSPEI Health Policy Statement -Spring 2019*



IT IS TIME TO CHANGE  
HOW WE DESIGN, PLAN  
AND MANAGE OUR  
HEALTH-CARE SYSTEM.

The Medical Society of Prince Edward Island (the association that represents more than 400 physicians, medical students and residents on PEI) asked the Island's doctors what they think needs to be done to improve our health-care system.

Their response was clear. It is time to change how we design, plan and manage our health-care system. More of the same will not work. PEI doctors want to be part of that change. They want to work shoulder-to-shoulder with government and other health-care providers to improve our health-care system.

Doctors want to help lead us away from today's reality where too many Islanders do not have a family doctor, there are long waits to see family doctors and specialists, and emergency rooms are overcrowded.

They want to help Prince Edward Island become:

- a province where every citizen has timely access to primary care;
- a national leader in health-care innovation; and
- the best place to practice medicine in Canada.

The goals are lofty, but doctors believe with drive, commitment, and through collaboration, it can be achieved. As a small province, Prince Edward Island is in the best position to introduce profound province-wide health-system change in a fairly short time frame.

## **Doctors are recommending that the province focus on these four areas:**

- 1 Integrate physicians into the decision-making processes so they can help problem solve, design, implement and be accountable for the future of our health-care system.
- 2 Implement primary care models that provide quality care that is accessible and sustainable.
- 3 Be leaders in health-care innovation, starting with creating one electronic health record for every Islander.
- 4 Develop and implement a physician resource plan and have doctors recruit doctors.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Doctors put forward their top four recommendations on what improvements they would like to see made to the health-care system. Each recommendation is rooted in the desire to improve Islanders' access to doctors and the health-care system.

## RECOMMENDATION 1

### Meaningfully engage physicians in health system decision-making.

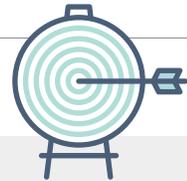
Doctors want to be more involved in health-system planning and decisions to help ensure all Islanders are receiving quality care on a more timely basis.

Doctors recognize that the health-care system is complex, and the demands are rising faster than the available resources. They want to help create a sustainable health-care system that adapts to Islanders' health-care needs.

Doctors do not assume they have all the answers. The expertise and knowledge of government, Health PEI and other health-care providers is essential to make the most informed decisions.

Collaborative decision-making will create the best outcomes. The engagement must be meaningful and ingrained within the decision-making structure, from problem-solving to implementation. This includes access to health-care data, resources and decision-making tables.

MSPEI, as the united voice of PEI's doctors, can help shape what meaningful physician engagement looks like.



#### OUR GOAL FOR ISLANDERS

Doctors are part of decision-making teams and feel ownership in helping to create a successful health system. Their ability to remove barriers and improve the system for their patients has reduced burnout, helped retain doctors and created an ideal place for new physicians to practice medicine.

#### DOCTOR SURVEY SAYS\*

*Not being able to provide **timely care** for their patients was the **#1 workplace stressor.***

*The **#1 priority** for the profession is to be more **meaningfully engaged in health-system decisions,** for the sake of improving the system for their patients.*

\* Results from a MSPEI physician survey; February 2019.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

# Implement primary care models that provide quality care that is accessible and sustainable.



**D**octors want to see Islanders have improved access to their family doctor and primary care teams, removing the need for a patient registry.

Our population is aging, our health-care needs are more complex and the health-care system is hard to navigate.

Islanders are going where they can to get the care they need when they need it. For many, it is their family doctor; for others, it is the emergency room, a walk-in clinic, nurse practitioner or pharmacist.

Access to primary care – the first point of contact for patients – needs to be coordinated, comprehensive and timely. Patients deserve access to a primary care team that has the expertise and ability to respond to their full scope of needs.

Family doctors do not believe there is one care model that works best for every community. Through input from health-care professionals and the community, guided by evidence, we need to develop a set of primary care model options that can be adapted based on what is best for each community. Health-care funding models will need to be responsive to the communities' needs.

### DOCTOR SURVEY SAYS\*

*72% of family physicians believe **providing care in a team is best** for patients.*



PATIENTS DESERVE ACCESS TO A PRIMARY CARE TEAM THAT HAS THE EXPERTISE AND ABILITY TO RESPOND TO THEIR FULL SCOPE OF NEEDS.

### OUR GOAL FOR ISLANDERS

Every Islander has timely access to a family doctor and primary care team. The care models vary across the province, based on the community's need. Every health-care professional is feeling valued and empowered to work to their full scope of practice, applying their specialized skill-set and knowledge in a way that provides the greatest value to patients. Patients have confidence that they are being cared for through every stage of life, seamlessly integrated with other health services. Decisions, based on evidence and health-care provider input, have created a sustainable and efficient primary health-care system.

\* Results from a MSPEI physician survey; February 2019.

## RECOMMENDATION 3

# Show more leadership in health-care innovation, starting with creating one electronic health record for every Islander.



**D**octors want every health-care provider and health-system planner to make informed health-care decisions, using reliable, timely and accurate patient information.

Prince Edward Island – and the health-care sector in general - have not kept pace with the evolution of technology. Paper continues to be a primary source of documentation, fax machines are frequently employed to share information, and a central repository of patient information is non-existent. We have more than five different health information systems, from drugs to hospital to mental health, each system operating in a silo.

The outdated methods create a sluggish system, can increase errors, promotes inefficiency and closes doors for further innovation. It does not create an environment where new physicians want to come to practice, and it contributes to burnout for our physicians and other health-care workers.

One solution for today is a provincially adopted – physician endorsed – electronic medical records (EMR) system. A system that allows health-care providers to record, track and share patient information in a secure and confidential electronic format. In addition to moving from a paper-based to electronic-based system, an EMR also enables efficiencies such as submitting referrals to specialists, identifying potential medication interactions with new prescriptions and notifying doctors when a follow-up appointment is required.

Beyond electronic health records, we need to be more innovative. We need to create a more responsive health-care system that is consistently exploring ways to provide better care, more efficiently.

### DOCTOR SURVEY SAYS\*

**96% of physicians want to see a provincially adopted EMR**

### OUR GOAL FOR ISLANDERS

Modern technology and a culture of innovation is the foundation of a progressive and efficient health-care system.

A provincially-adopted and physician-endorsed EMR is at the core of how we collect and share patient information.

Our health card is like today's bank card - it holds important information that can be accessed by the right people at the right time. Whether in the family doctor's office, an emergency room or pharmacy, health-care providers are making decisions based on the most up-to-date patient information. Patients also have access to their health information giving them more ownership of their health-care outcomes. Patient care is safer, more timely, more convenient and our health-care system is more efficient.

Health-system planners have access to new data that allows them to accurately forecast future patient and community needs, which enables them to plan better and make evidence-based decisions.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

# Create a physician resource plan and have doctors recruit doctors.

**D**octors want every Islander to have timely access to a family doctor and medical specialists. No one should wait an unreasonable amount of time to see their family doctor and primary care team.

Doctors want to see more thoughtful and data-driven planning. We want to have a clearer picture of what health-care services will be provided on the Island in five and ten years' time. Using that information, we can create a Physician Resource Plan that forecasts how many physicians PEI needs to provide those services. This plan would be responsive to our growing population and health-care needs.

Armed with a resource plan, working alongside doctors, we can proactively recruit doctors based on those anticipated needs and prevent prolonged doctor vacancies.

Doctors also believe we can improve on our recruitment efforts by showing more flexibility in how we recruit and by inviting doctors who practice in PEI to be part of the recruitment process.

When physicians are involved in the recruitment process, they offer practical insights and help potential recruits gain a clear and full understanding of what it is like to practice medicine on the Island.

Our doctors can also foster relationships with PEI medical students and residents, creating a supportive and welcoming place for them to return home and practice medicine. The early connection to physicians within the community also helps establish a potential mentorship before the physician even steps foot in the community. The sense of feeling supported and welcomed is often a critical success factor when deciding where to practice.



### OUR GOAL FOR ISLANDERS

We have the right mix of family physicians and medical specialists distributed across the Island to provide timely care to all Islanders. We no longer require a Patient Registry, patients are assigned a primary care team when they move to the province. We also have a reliable and comprehensive view of all Islanders health-care needs and how many physicians are needed to serve those needs on a timely basis.

### DOCTOR SURVEY SAYS\*

**56% of physicians say they plan to reduce their practice, leave the province or retire within the next five years.**

**65% of physicians worry it will be difficult to fill their position when the need comes.**

\* Results from a MSPEI physician survey; February 2019.



## IN CONCLUSION

The doctors of PEI believe that we can be the nation's leader in health-care delivery. The prescription for this vision requires all stakeholders within the system from health-care administrators to front line care providers to work together – with a shared vision for what is best for our patients. We must think bigger and open our minds to innovation. We need to plan for tomorrow rather than react to today.

Through collaboration, leadership and more planning, Islanders can experience the most accessible and sustainable health-care system in Canada.

We can do better; Islanders deserve better.

