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Statement from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Newfoundland and Labrador on Proposed Amendments to the Medical Act, 2011

October 14, 2022 (St. John's, NL) - The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Newfoundland and Labrador is unwavering in its commitment to protect the public interest by setting the standards for medical practitioners in the province. At the same time, we understand the challenges facing everyone in getting to see a physician. Every day we feel the weight of making sure the physician that you see can provide you with the best possible care—without delaying the addition of new licensed doctors into our system.

That is why we are pleased that the Minister of Health has asked us to sit on his advisory committee and we will be active contributors. We are examining our licensing processes and commit to work as expediently as we can to license qualified doctors, while ensuring safety and the necessary skill levels of applicants. Our goal is to attain a safe and satisfactory outcome for both the physicians looking to move here and for patients who need care.

Licensing work has some fundamental checks that are vital to patient safety and care, such as understanding a physician's background, where they may have trained, and what their prior record tells us. We will ask if concerns were identified about the care they provided, if they have a criminal record, and what their references say. We make sure that they can effectively communicate with patients, and that they can provide the professional care that is required in their role. We constantly look for efficiencies in this process.

We rely on national certifying bodies to determine whether a physician's training meets the Canadian standard. The College of Family Physicians of Canada and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada have the capability to assess training programs, a step which helps validate the quality and applicability of a doctor's education and experience before they begin to provide care for patients in this province.

Gathering this information to confidently provide a licence to a physician takes time. We appreciate that in a recruitment and retention crisis, we should do everything we can to expedite every process, both for the physician moving here and for the patients awaiting care. Our collective goal, and the thinking we will bring to the advisory committee, is to work together to ensure that the physicians who are licenced to practice medicine provide safe and quality care to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We look forward to collaborating with the Minister and his team in the development of the Medical Regulations that will support the College in its mandate to ensure that the physicians who are licenced to practice medicine here have the skills, training, and experience to do so.

For more information, contact cpsnl@cpsnl.ca.