



EXE-6413/01

GOVERNMENT OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Department of Health and Community Services
Office of the Minister

APR 18 2006

Dr. Diponkar Banerjee, President
Canadian Association of Pathologists
Association Canadienne Des Pathologistes
774 promenade Echo Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5N8

Dear Dr. Banerjee:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your correspondence dated February 01, 2006 regarding Laboratory Medicine Specialists.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is working closely with the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association to address the many issues identified by the *Service Coverage Committee* regarding Pathology services. All parties have recognized that physician compensation is but one of the many challenges facing this specialized group.

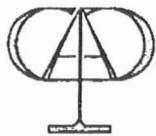
I do take exception to your suggestion that the recent errors in breast cancer screening experienced in this province were as a result of not having invested in high quality pathologists. It has been recognized that the tests associated with this procedure are fraught with errors in reproduction as well as changes in national standards. Once the possibility that patient slides may have been misinterpreted was recognized, the Department of Pathology was very proactive in scoping out the magnitude of the issue as well as recommending a course of action to address the problem. Your letter suggests that the Pathologists employed by Eastern Health are less than qualified, which is a grave disservice to your peers represented by your organization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Osborne', written over a large, stylized, light-colored mark that resembles a large 'O' or a stylized letter.

TOM OSBORNE
Minister

cb/mem



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF PATHOLOGISTS
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES PATHOLOGISTES

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February 1, 2006

Honourable John Ottenheimer
Minister of Health and Community Services
P.O. Box 8700
West Block, Confederation Building
St. John's, NL, A1B 4J6

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REGISTRY		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Dear Minister Ottenheimer:

Re: Laboratory Medicine Specialists (Pathologists) in Newfoundland

Eighty percent of all medical decisions are based on laboratory reports issued by pathologists, yet pathology services usually cost less than 5% of the healthcare budget in most jurisdictions. We are facing a severe and growing pathologist manpower shortage across the country, and Newfoundland is likely to face a crisis very soon, as other provinces are improving the compensation of pathologists in order to attract more manpower.

Unless you are prepared to address, in the immediate future, the fact that pathologists in your province are amongst the lowest-paid professionals in the nation, please do not be surprised if your province experiences even greater difficulty in attracting and retaining pathologists than you face now. Not addressing this is false economy, as patient care will be adversely affected by the lack of high quality pathologists in the province. You have already experienced a recent example of the effects of not investing in high quality pathology when the errors in breast cancer estrogen receptor status were discovered, affecting hundreds of patients in your province.

Historically your province has relied heavily on foreign-trained pathologists who are unlikely to stay on in the province as more attractive jobs come up elsewhere in the nation. Please break this cycle by promoting and protecting your best assets who have such a profound influence on the quality of patient care.

As is our pathology so is our practice....

Sir William Osler

Sincerely,

Diponkar Banerjee MBChB, PhD, FRCPC
President

Clinical Professor, Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, University of British Columbia
Program Leader, Cancer Pathology
Director of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine
British Columbia Cancer Agency

