



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
25 OCTOBER 2024**

To our neighbours, families and friends:

We are student leaders from Dalhousie Medicine New Brunswick. We were elected to represent medical students training in English who are from New Brunswick.

We have chosen to study here. Many of us have already signed return of service contracts with this province. We write to you today in hopes that you hear our concerns. We hope that our new government will meet with us in the coming weeks. These are our priorities:

**Access to care for all persons who need it:**

A staggering 21% of New Brunswickers lack a primary care provider (New Brunswick Health Council, June 18, 2024). Last year, more than half of our graduates chose Family Medicine for their career (Global News, June 7, 2024). We regularly exceed the national average number of family medicine graduates, and we are asking our government to support programs we intend to practice.

Scientific evidence published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ) and cited by the New Brunswick Medical Society (NBMS) shows that we must improve healthcare for people who can get pregnant, for non-binary people and transgender people, and for people who use drugs. We urge the Government of New Brunswick to listen to the NBMS, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA), and other groups who speak out in support of these services.

Our professional obligation is to provide the highest quality care to our patients. New Brunswick's policymakers must respect this professional obligation, not undermine it. Access to surgical abortion services in New Brunswick has lagged behind other provinces for many years (NBMS, September 21, 2020). Our government must act to remedy this longstanding deficit.

We hope the next Government of New Brunswick will end its crusade against Policy 713, which protects young people in school. As the NBMS argues, trans and gender diverse young people are at increased risk of death when their normal, healthy identity formation cannot be freely and safely explored (NBMS, August 15, 2023). Policy 713 and safe, supportive schools, save lives.

Third, we call on the next Government of New Brunswick to support harm reduction and safe prescribing across this province. These practices are proven to stop toxic drug deaths. We all have personal experiences with friends, family members, mentors and loved ones who have been hurt or killed by overdose or toxic substances. Their deaths were all preventable.

Above all else, investments in social, recreational, and educational programs directly improve the health of our patients. When we chronically underfund these services, we are seeding life-limiting health problems— including chronic illness and death.

### **Support for medical learners:**

We are living the consequences of government austerity. All the while, our government repeats to us over and over: *when students train in New Brunswick, they are more likely to practice in New Brunswick.*

We support increasing available training seats in New Brunswick but caution the following: expanding the number of medical school seats in New Brunswick has already been done. Now, policymakers must work hard remedy the gaps in this plan. Simply, our school is too small, and we still cannot complete the most important stage of our training in this province.

Our building is so small, the lecture theatre cannot seat an entire class of students. Our operations rely on students skipping lectures. Small group learning sessions and clinical teaching spill out into storage rooms and boardrooms. If the solution to the healthcare crisis is to train more doctors, then we require the built infrastructure to support our learning.

Similarly, we need to talk about residency— the final step we need to finish our training. The lack of program choice in New Brunswick represents an overlooked gap in recruitment programs. Of the 37 possible fields we can choose to study after graduation, we offer only 5 based in New Brunswick. New Brunswickers need more than 5 different types of doctors.

Lastly, we must draw attention to the rising cost of our training. Student loan programs are insufficient and most of us are forced to borrow hundreds of thousands of dollars from banks. As interest accumulates over many years, New Brunswick's return of service scholarships and bonuses may as well be paid directly to these banks.

The cost of living has risen dramatically, yet the government has failed to materially support us as it claims to do. If we expect learners to finance so much of their education privately, we will never have a physician demographic that reflects the makeup of this province. New Brunswickers deserve to see themselves reflected in their doctors.

We, the undersigned, are the future of medicine. We each aspire to be leaders in our communities and advocates for our patients and all New Brunswickers. We hope to

highlight disparities in training, in recruitment, and in population health programs to improve healthcare for everyone.

If we are the future of medicine in this province, we require a seat at the table when decisions are made. We hope that our new Premier will hear our voices and make true on her promise to improve healthcare. We hope her office will arrange to meet with us within 60 days of forming government.

Truthfully,

**Benjamin Peterson**

Class of 2026  
President, Dalhousie  
Medical Students' Society

Saint John,  
New Brunswick

**Katie Gowlett**

Class of 2026  
Class Co-President  
DMNB Class of 2026

Saint John,  
New Brunswick

**Samuel Arseneau**

Class of 2027  
Class Co-President  
DMNB Class of 2027

Fredericton,  
New Brunswick

**Bilal Khan**

Class of 2028  
Class Co-President  
DMNB Class of 2028

Saint John,  
New Brunswick