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AMA president speaks about new deal, says Alberta doctors didn't 'achieve everything that we wished to'

Mrinali Anchan
CBC News

The president of the Alberta Medical Association (AMA) says there is more work to be done even after doctors voted to ratify a proposed three-year pay deal with the provincial government.

In an interview with CBC News, AMA president Dr. Heidi Fell said the agreement will start retroactively from April 1, 2026.

"In the first year, [the deal] offers a three per cent increase, 2.5 per cent in the second year, and in the third year the increase will be negotiated with binding arbitration as a backstop," she said.

Fell added that the money is not allocated equally across all specialties within the profession, with family medicine getting the largest increase on a percentage basis.

"Other specialties vary according to different amounts, all the way down to five specialties, which actually get zero per cent on the [codes that they do](#) the majority of," she said.

The agreement is a development that Fell described as the "result of media-

tion in a difficult and constrained bargaining environment."

She said that 22 per cent of eligible members participated in the vote, with 76 per cent voting in favour of it and 24 per cent opposed.

"While we did not achieve everything that we wished to in negotiation, it is a foundation to provide some stability to work on many of the other things that the health-care system needs in order to provide better care for Albertans."

In a statement issued Tuesday, Hospital and Surgical Health Services Minister Adriana LaGrange called the ratification vote "a positive step forward for Alberta's health-care system."

"This agreement represents a fair and balanced deal that supports physicians, strengthens care for Albertans, and is responsible for taxpayers — protecting the long-term sustainability of our publicly funded health-care system."

Fell said because the deal was reached through mediation, outstanding demands from doctors remain.

"We also, of course, were asking for a



An undated file photo of a stethoscope resting on a lab coat.
CBC

little bit more money, as is always the case, and we wanted more voice in the system — more defined voice."

Fell said the AMA also hoped to include laboratory and academic physicians in negotiations, but this did not happen.

Provisions for the implementation of [triage liaison physicians](#) were also not part of the agreement.

"That is something that is still being worked on and is currently with lawyers for looking at documents," Fell said. "So we're hoping to have an update on that soon."

She also noted more support is needed to address acute care concerns going into the respiratory virus season this fall.

Maddison McKee, press secretary for

the Ministry of Hospital and Surgical Health Services, provided a statement about the deal to CBC News on Wednesday.

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“Nearly all physicians will receive direct rate increases, with the exception of a small number of specialties already compensated significantly above their peers, many of whom will still benefit from increased funding and supports elsewhere in the agreement,” she wrote in an email.

“For physician groups not covered by this agreement, we will continue working with the AMA on their respective agreements.”

McKee said that beyond rate increases, the agreement invests \$40 million annually to expand the physician on-call program, an additional \$30 million annually to strengthen rural physician recruitment and retention, and more than \$21 million to enhance parental leave and educational supports for physicians.

“These investments build on a record \$34.4-billion health budget, including an all-time high of \$13.8 billion for acute care,” McKee said.

“We know there is more work to do, but this agreement is an important step forward in supporting physicians and strengthening health care across the province.”

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