



Dear Colleagues,

My name is Dr. Charuka Maheswaran and I would ask that you choose me to be your advocate as President-Elect of Doctors of BC.

With the new Physicians' Master Agreement and Primary Care Networks on the horizon, these are uncertain times within an unknown landscape. I would ask that you choose me to advocate for physicians and to chart a course that benefits not only us and our families, but our patients too.

I entered medical school in the UK in 1995 when the world seemed very different. I grew up in south Wales, an immigrant and daughter of immigrants. I was blessed to become part of a nation into which I was not born and educated to a level not offered to the majority of the world.

I have been a physician for almost nineteen years and in that time, I have been privileged to work in England, Wales, New Zealand, Malawi, Tanzania and Canada. I have worked with grassroots activists, with governmental agencies, NGOs and international organisations, including WHO. I have witnessed the workings of these varying governance structures and would bring that spectrum of understanding to Doctors of BC.

I currently serve as Co-Chair of the Physician's Health Program, as well as on Doctors of BC committees and am a Society of General Practitioners delegate for the Doctors of BC Representative Assembly. I have been founding Chair of the Rural and Remote Division of Family Practice, Vice-Chair of Comox Valley Division of Family Practice and Vice-President of BC College of Family Physicians. These roles have allowed me to observe the breadth of healthcare delivery in B.C. and to interconnect with our medical and non-medical partners in health, but most importantly, to be the conduit for my physician colleagues at tables of influence.

I have been a rural family doctor on Vancouver Island for the past 7 years and work with a lovely cohort of patients and colleagues, who make each day interesting. I am mother to three wondrous children and balance the challenges of medical care for my patients, with raising my children to productive adulthood.

Rural medicine in BC has unique challenges, which those of you in places wild know all too well, but there are similar challenges faced by my friends and colleagues who work in inner cities and suburbs and all the places in between; the social determinants of health, genetics and epigenetics can be difficult to surmount, but we all, day in and day out, dust ourselves off, take a deep breath and do our very best to make that person's life a little better. That for me is the glory of medicine; we are gentle warriors, quietly, steadfastly and with grace, there for our patients, to help and guide them through life's tumults, fighting death and destruction with all the skills that modern medicine will allow and when that isn't enough, we are the poets and philosophers who hold their hands with compassion and kindness and take a moment to acknowledge the passing of a cherished fellow being.

Now is the time to ensure that patient-focused care remains the core principle of medicine, whilst also maintaining our autonomy and agency within a team-based approach to health delivery.

Now is the time to foster inclusivity and diversity in a time of uncertainty and division. We have more in common than what separates us; our shared values and goals are what binds us as a profession and keeps society thriving. We physicians are infrastructure; we are woven into the fabric of society and keep it stable and functioning.

Now is the time to ensure that our whole population has access to the world class healthcare that BC is capable of. We as physicians are uniquely placed to influence the mechanisms to ensure that universal access to health is truly possible, so that all of us can realise our unique potentials; we all know that without health, society cannot flourish.

Now is the time to ensure that the physician voice is strong and represents our values and hopes for both us and our patients. I would ask to be that voice.

We need ongoing respectful conversations with government to ensure that our voices and those of our patients are incorporated into the future landscape and network of health. We need improvement in access to appropriate care and availability of resources, including affordable medications and timely procedures; we need the ability to deliver sustainable, kind and conscientious care and we need healthy working environments, which value our personhood and enable us to function to the best of our ability.

As your advocate I would encourage open and transparent dialogue with you, to build a strong and representative organization, which works to ensure that all feel welcome and valued and to ultimately make all our lives a little easier, including addressing the things that matter and irk most in our daily lives, from alleviation of grinding bureaucracy to allocation of fair compensation, so that we can have a system in which all of us can thrive.

Now is the time for me to use my skills of measured negotiation, considered thought, informed by attentive listening and core values of inclusivity and representation, to advocate for BC physicians of all walks. I would bring a fresh voice informed by global experience, with honesty and authenticity, respect and compassion.

Thank you for considering my candidacy and it would be an honour to be of service as your Doctors of BC President-Elect.

Dr. Charuka Maheswaran

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