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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Nouvelle-Écosse | 57e  | 1re  | Discours sur la santé | 17 Juin 1999 | James Smith | Minister of Health |  |

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to report on the progress being made on the recruitment of cancer specialists in Nova Scotia. To fully understand the significance of what we have been able to accomplish to date, I think it is important for us to consider the overall picture. The recruitment and retention of qualified medical and radiation oncologists has been an ongoing challenge in all provinces for some time. In fact, right now in Canada, there are currently more than 30 vacancies in the field of medical oncology alone and less than 10 of these specialists are being trained in the whole country each year.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that it was absolutely critical for Nova Scotia to be in a position to competitively recruit for these specialists and we have made certain we are. We now offer medical oncologists the best salary range in Canada. Our new alternative funding agreement with the Department of Internal Medicine has improved the academic environment for these and other specialists, making Nova Scotia a more attractive career destination.

The creation of Cancer Care Nova Scotia has given Nova Scotia another attractive quality as well. This is the first time we have ever had a program in place to specifically address cancer concerns throughout the province. We have given them our commitment of $2.5 million in new money this year to help them achieve that goal. We are getting the message out that we are seriously committed to the fight against cancer and we are gaining ground in this battle. Mr. Speaker, our Commissioner of Cancer Care Nova Scotia, Dr. Andrew Padmos, and others have put a great deal of energy into recruiting trained oncology specialists to the province and I am pleased to see their efforts are paying off.

Looking at medical oncology first, earlier this year, we announced that Dr. Mark Dorreen of St. John's, Newfoundland, will be joining the staff of the Nova Scotia Cancer Centre in July. Locum oncologist, Dr. Michael Goodyear, has extended his contract at the centre as well. He will now remain on staff until at least January 2000.

Dr. Leonard Reyno of Hamilton signed on as the new Head of the Division of Medical Oncology last month. He is a native of Herring Cove, Nova Scotia, by the way, Mr. Speaker. He will begin in September and credited his decision to join the centre to the restructuring and the new direction of our cancer care system here in Nova Scotia. One of Dr. Reyno's responsibilities will be to work with Dr. Padmos and other partners to initiate a process to create a training program for medical oncologists in this province. This project will help ensure a constant supply of these trained specialists for years to come.

I am also happy to report that we have recently filled the medical oncology vacancy in Cape Breton. Dr. Raj (Rog) Pahil has recently accepted an offer to join the Cape Breton Cancer Treatment Centre.

We also have an agreement in principle with a sixth medical oncologist for the Nova Scotia Cancer Centre at the QE II. This individual's paperwork is moving through the system and his appointment should be finalized this week.

These appointments mean we now have a full complement of two medical oncologists in Cape Breton. We now have on staff and committed to join the Cancer Centre at the QE II, six medical oncologists with one new approved position to be filled, bringing us up to eight medical oncologists in Nova Scotia.

Our recruitment successes are not limited to medical oncology, however. We recently recruited four additional radiation therapists for the QE II centre, in spite of a very competitive national market. We now have a full complement of 30 radiation therapists in the province: 23 in Halifax; and 7 in Cape Breton. (Applause)

In addition, we have some very promising specialists in surgical oncology disciplines who have committed to come to work in Nova Scotia. So you see, Mr. Speaker, we are building a team of cancer specialists in Nova Scotia, the likes of which has never been known in this province. (Applause)

We are also doing very well in radiation oncology. Of the nine radiation oncology positions funded by our department, eight are currently full, seven in Halifax and one in Cape Breton. Recruitment efforts are well underway for the vacancy in Cape Breton and our modern, fully-equipped cancer centre and radiation program at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital is making that region very attractive to radiation oncologists and radiation therapists.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing remarkably well in our recruitment and retention of cancer specialists in this province. There are many headlines when one or two leave, and that is the purpose of this statement today. Now that we have filled those vacancies and moved forward, I believe it at least warrants a statement in this House of Assembly, even if we don't get the headlines. This was all read, by the way, at a meeting the other day, which was largely attended by Cancer Care Nova Scotia on the announcement of the launch of that, but it was not fully reported.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I am pleased to report that these appointments mean that we now have more medical and radiation oncologists for Nova Scotia than ever before. I thank you.