

Noteworthy

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Government announces plan for provincial dialysis services

Health and Community Services Minister Gerald Smith recently released the report of the Provincial Renal Advisory Committee, and announced that government will move forward to implement the recommendations.

The Provincial Renal Advisory Committee was established in December 2000 with a mandate to advise on issues related to the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of renal services for Newfoundland and Labrador. It was chaired by Dr. Brendan Barrett, a nephrologist.

"The committee's primary recommendation is that government should establish a coordinated provincial kidney program which will focus on continual planning, implementation and evaluation of services for people with kidney disease, and government accepts this recommendation," said Minister Smith. "We will begin work immediately to establish a provincial kidney program, including appointing a full-time coordinator and a part-time medical director."

The committee's work also included identifying the criteria needed to establish new dialysis sites in the province. Based on that work, the committee recommends a minimum of 10-12 dialysis patients that require facility-based therapy in order to establish new sites.

Minister Smith said that some regions currently have the threshold caseload to start operations, and other regions are expected to reach the threshold in the short-to-medium-term. "New sites in Carbonear and Gander will be implemented first. Government will now work with provincial program and the boards to look at an appropriate time for implementation for dialysis sites for the Burin Peninsula, St. Anthony, and Labrador."

Dr. Barrett explained that provincial coordination is critical to ensuring the necessary kidney services meet the needs of patients in the province. "No one region can stand alone when it comes to providing care for kidney disease," he said. "Satellite services need a link to the province's tertiary care site. In addition, provincial coordination will ensure that there is a consistent quality of care in the services provided across the province."

"I want to thank Dr. Barrett and all committee members for their work. They have completed a comprehensive examination of kidney disease and the treatment needs for our province. Their work will be the foundation for the work of the provincial kidney program," concluded Minister Smith.

A copy of the Provincial Renal Advisory Committee Report is available at: www.gov.nl.ca/health/publications 


Commissioner to review fish processing policy

Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Yvonne Jones recently announced Eric Dunne as the Commissioner to Review Fish Processing Policy in Newfoundland and Labrador. "Mr. Dunne has the professional experience in the fishing industry to be able to provide the people of the province with a comprehensive report," said Minister Jones.

In June of 2003, the provincial government committed to a review of fish processing policy, including the issuance of licences, regional balance, industry stability, and maximizing the value of our resources. This process will also be linked to the current call for federal and provincial joint management of the fishery and the federal government will be invited to participate in the policy review.

Minister Jones said: "There has been substantial structural adjustment in the harvesting and processing sectors and the dynamics within the industry continue to require governments to adjust policies to changing conditions. Over the past six months in particular, the province's fishing industry has had one crisis after another. With the closure of the northern and Gulf cod fisheries and the quota cuts in the crab fishery, processors, harvesters and plant workers are facing more uncertainty than ever before. This government has conducted studies in the recent past to help our industry move forward. As commissioner, Mr. Dunne will draw upon other work that has been completed including the *Special Panel on Corporate Concentration*, the *Report of the Inshore Shrimp Panel* and the *White Paper on Joint Management*."

The Commissioner will have consultations with stakeholders and determine the direction required for proper management of the fish processing sector and the long term stability of the industry.

The news release and Terms of Reference can be viewed at: www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2003/fishaq/0730n07.htm 

Minister announces additional MRI capacity

Health and Community Services Minister Gerald Smith announced that a stationary Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) unit will be acquired this year by the Western Health Care Corporation and in the next budget year a MRI unit will be acquired for the Central Region.

"In Healthier Together, our province's strategic health plan, we outlined our commitment to improve the quality, accessibility and sustainability of the health and community services system. Ensuring that proper diagnostic equipment is available in this province plays a huge part in helping us achieve this goal," said Minister Smith.

Minister Smith explained that the Western and Central MRI units will triple the MRI capacity in the province, permitting shorter waiting lists for people in all regions. It is anticipated that the new unit in Corner Brook will be operational by June 2004 and the unit for the Central Region will be operational later in 2004-05.

The decision regarding the type of MRI unit, fixed or mobile, as well as the location, followed an extensive consultation process. Minister Smith said that he appreciated the expert advice of physicians and health administrators from many regions. 