

Noteworthy

New federal health funding fails to ensure the sustainability of health care

According to Health Minister Gerald Smith the new federal health funding has really "fallen short" of government expectations. Following a more in depth analysis of the new federal funding outlined last week by the Prime Minister, local health and finance officials are estimating that Newfoundland and Labrador's share will amount to only \$42.5 million in the coming fiscal year.

Of the money that the federal government has put on the table for the next three years much has been clearly earmarked as to where it can be spent. Twenty-five per cent of it can be used to "shore up" or sustain the current health system; another 15 per cent is for diagnostic/medical equipment which includes training; and the remaining 60 per cent is for "buying reform" in areas of home care, catastrophic drug coverage and primary health care.

New federal funding for health care for Canada is only about one third of what the provinces were seeking. Although Newfoundland and Labrador will receive at least an extra \$170 million over the next three years from the federal government, it is important to note that real change in the health system costs a lot of money and takes time.

"We as a province will continue to press the federal government to recognize and acknowledge their responsibility, with respect to an increase in health care expenditures in this province," said Minister Smith

"A lot of the concerns I have to deal with today as minister of health can't wait until next year or the year after that or in three years time."

The provincial government will continue to work to improve health care services for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It has been and will continue to be a very high priority at \$1.5 billion of the annual provincial budget. ❧

Province begins 2003 with increase in employment

Following employment gains in 2002, Newfoundland and Labrador began 2003 with a further increase in employment, as well as growth in labour force participation to the highest rate ever for the month of January.

According to the latest Labour Force Survey released from Statistics Canada, employment in the province was up 2.1 per cent, or approximately 4,100 jobs, in January 2003 compared to the same month last year.

Ralph Wiseman, Minister of Human Resources and Employment, said: "In 2002, we saw record high annual averages for labour force participation rate (58.6 per cent) and labour force size (257,400), and it's great to see this positive trend continue in the new year."

Growth was recorded in both the good and services sectors, with gains in industries such as primary fishing, transportation and warehousing, and health care. ❧

Province applauds decision to extend CARD funding for agriculture industry

Forest Resources and Agrifoods Minister Rick Woodford is pleased with the recent decision by Agriculture and Agri-foods Canada to extend funding under the Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development (CARD) fund to the end of March.

According to Mr. Woodford, the extension in CARD funding will continue to provide the agriculture sector in this province with valuable assistance to pursue meaningful initiatives aimed at improving the industry.

"There has been significant growth in the agrifoods industry in Newfoundland and Labrador in recent years, due to the

development of specialty products and niche markets, increased export focus and improved farm management and marketing skills," he said. "Ongoing CARD funds will enable industry in this province to build upon accomplishments made in these areas as well as pursue new initiatives. I encourage those involved in the agrifoods sector to take advantage of the support provided through the CARD fund."

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the fund has provided assistance of over \$3.7 million to 75 projects, while leveraging an additional \$2 million through industry. ❧

