



Noteworthy

Elimination of school fees announced

Education Minister Gerry Reid announced the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will eliminate all school fees directly associated with the delivery of the province's K-12 curriculum in the classroom.

"Many parents find it difficult to pay school fees in addition to the regular costs associated with preparing children for school," Minister Reid said. "Others have questioned the lack of consistency in the amounts charged for school fees across the province, and the apparent disparity in materials and services covered by school fees. We intend to end the confusion, once and for all."

Beginning next September, Minister Reid said parents will no longer be required to pay for resource materials and services; the so-called "consumables" which are part of the province's authorized curriculum. In order to ensure all schools will be treated equitably, government will cover the cost of school fees by providing a per-pupil curriculum materials grant to school boards, with the clear understanding it will be directed, in its entirety, to students in the classroom. It will represent additional, guaranteed monies for schools, on top of the operating grants already provided to school boards for school use.

Minister Reid said the school fees issue has become extremely complex, particularly as the amounts charged to parents vary so widely from school to school. "It is clear that consumable resources, like workbooks, required for the provincial curriculum, will be covered by government," he said. "It is just as clear, however, that different schools have different ideas as to what materials and services should be included in school fees. That's why the consultation process will be so important." ❏

Government to create new seniors' drug program

Health and Community Services Minister Gerald Smith outlined government's plan to develop a new seniors' drug program.

"Government realizes that many seniors do not have access to private drug insurance or government drug cards. Therefore, starting next year, government will introduce a new seniors' drug program to ensure that every senior can have reasonable access to pharmaceuticals which are listed on government's formulary," said Minister Smith.

The new program will replace the current seniors' portion of the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program and will also be consistent with the catastrophic drug program First Ministers agreed to develop. Minister Smith explained that the provincial government decided to move on a new seniors program now as the catastrophic program is not scheduled to come into effect until the end of 2005-06.

Minister Smith also announced, on national Alzheimer Coffee Break Day, that the class of drugs which treat Alzheimer disease, will be added to the provincial formulary. This class includes the brand names Aricept, Reminyl and Exelon. ❏

RuralEXPO 2003 poised for success

With exhibit space fully booked for the rural business exhibition, a total of 90 nominations received for the third annual Community Economic Development Awards, and more than 350 people expected to attend the conference program, RuralEXPO 2003 is poised for success.

"I am pleased with the high level of interest in RuralEXPO 2003," said Industry, Trade and Rural Development Minister Judy Foote. "RuralEXPO is an opportunity for businesses, community organizations and individuals to profile

the role they are playing in promoting economic opportunity and business growth in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. The level of interest shown to date demonstrates the confidence and commitment people from all corners of our province have in the future of rural Newfoundland and Labrador."

Official opening ceremonies for RuralEXPO 2003 take place Friday, September 26, at the rural business exhibition in the Gander Community Centre. ❏

New CT Scanner for Burin Peninsula Health Care Centre

Health and Community Services Minister Gerald Smith announced a new CT Scanner will be acquired for the Peninsulas Health Care Corporation to be located at the Burin Peninsula Health Care Centre.

"This new equipment will help the Peninsulas Health Care Corporation recruit and retain physicians at the Burin Peninsula Health Care Centre. This centre will now have a range of technology available, particularly important when attracting new medical graduates who now receive CT training as part of their medical training," said Minister Smith. ❏

