

# Noteworthy



## Next steps outlined for tobacco litigation

Premier Roger Grimes, Justice Minister Kelvin Parsons and Health and Community Services Minister Gerald Smith provided information on government's next steps in legal action against tobacco manufacturers. In 1999, government committed to support a lawsuit against tobacco manufacturers to seek recovery of the health care costs incurred by the use of tobacco products.

"The care of individuals who suffer from smoking-related illnesses encumbers the delivery of healthcare in the province. We believe that this burden should be borne by the tobacco manufacturers and not by the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador," said the Premier. "This lawsuit is not just about recouping the province's costs incurred in treating smoking related illnesses. It is about making tobacco companies accountable for their role in the promotion of the use of tobacco products. We are hoping that through this lawsuit we can change the attitude of people in this province, of all ages, towards tobacco use and smoking."

"The most alarming cost, is the cost of lives," said Minister Smith. "Approximately 1,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians die each year from tobacco-related illness. We firmly believe it is time the tobacco industry accept responsibility for the negative impacts its product has on the lives of individuals."

The U.S. firm, Humphrey, Farrington & McClain, is prepared to take the Province's case on a contingency fee arrangement. The compensation for their professional services will be payable upon receipt by the Province of the proceeds of any settlement, or court award.

"We believe, as does this U.S. legal firm, that we have a strong case to recover the enormous health costs associated with tobacco use," said Minister Parsons. "This is a win-win arrangement. The firm is confident it will be successful in the lawsuit, and the province will ultimately receive compensation for horrendous health care costs related to tobacco."

## Province, doctors agree to binding arbitration

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association have agreed to binding arbitration to resolve outstanding issues relating to the recent labour action taken by physicians. Only unresolved issues will go to binding arbitration.

The province has committed to honour binding arbitration, as it has in all cases in the past, and has agreed to incentives for better physician coverage in emergency rooms across the province as well as funding to establish a pilot project for walk-in clinics for after hours coverage in the St. John's area.

Government and the NLMA will immediately establish a Physician Services Liaison Committee to address medical issues of mutual concern. Premier Grimes said he looks forward to working with the NLMA on provision of health care. He thanked the public for their patience, and commended health care providers for their service and cooperation during the labour action.

## Increased IT access for Burin

Businesses on the Burin Peninsula now have increased access to IT services with the assistance of a new IT Enabling Centre located on the College of the North Atlantic campus in Burin. The Centre, a partnership between the Marystown-Burin Area Chamber of Commerce, the Schooner Regional Economic Development Board and the College, will provide IT services, infrastructure and human resources to local businesses.

"This investment in the IT Enabling Centre at the College of the North Atlantic's Burin Campus reflects the priorities set out in the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Renewal Strategy for Jobs and Growth for education, technology and rural development," said MHA Mary Hodder, on behalf of Industry, Trade and Rural Development Minister Kelvin Parsons.

## Legal agreements signed

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Inco Ltd. signed a Development Agreement and an Industrial and Employment Benefits Agreement for the Voisey's Bay Project. These agreements contain the undertakings and commitments that both parties agreed to in the Statement of Principles signed on June 11, 2002.

"On June 11, 2002, government delivered on its commitment to the people of the province that the Voisey's Bay nickel deposit would only be developed in a manner that maximizes benefits for Newfoundland and Labrador. These contracts ensure that Voisey's Bay nickel concentrate will be processed in the province to a finished nickel metal product and that any concentrate shipped out will be replaced for processing," said Premier Grimes.

