



**Newfoundland & Labrador Public Health Association  
(NLPHA)**

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**News Release**

The Newfoundland and Labrador Public Health Association (NLPHA) joins its partner the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association (NLMA) in calling upon the provincial government to fund tobacco cessation medications and nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs) for low-income residents as a benefit under the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program. We agree that to further reduce smoking rates and decrease the health and economic burden of tobacco-related disease in this province we need to focus on expanding cessation strategies. We believe that by making cessation therapies more accessible for people living with low income we will not only see a reduction in tobacco use and prevent the onset of preventable tobacco-related diseases, but we will also save our province's health system millions of dollars.

NLPHA acknowledges the significant investments of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, through the Poverty Reduction Strategy, in expanding coverage under the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program for residents living with low income. "Adding coverage of tobacco cessation medications and NRTs would remove a major financial barrier for individuals who are ready to quit smoking and find the cost of these highly successful pharmacological therapies unaffordable," said Dr. Minnie Wasmeier, spokesperson for the NLPHA.

The relationship between chronic disease and low income is well documented. In comparison to other groups, people living with low income experience double the rates of disease for many chronic conditions. "Chronic disease is the single biggest threat to the health of our population and to the sustainability of the health system and we have some of the highest rates of heart disease and stroke in Canada," stated Dr. Wasmeier. "Not surprisingly, we also have one of the highest rates of smoking which is a known contributing factor to these diseases. We need to do everything we can to level the playing field so all residents of the province have the best chance to be healthy."

NLPHA is a voluntary, non-profit provincial association comprised of health professionals, community members, and affiliated organizations that promotes and supports public health. NLPHA is affiliated with the Canadian Public Health Association.

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