

**Speaking Notes – Mary Lynn Pender, Smokers' Helpline  
Tobacco Position Paper News Conference  
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Every day at the NL Lung Association Smokers' Helpline we hear from individuals from this province who are struggling to overcome tobacco addiction.

The Smokers' Helpline provides services to approximately 1500 to 2000 individual smokers each year. With the quitline number featured on cigarette packages as part of Health Canada's mandatory warnings, the service's reach and utilization is increasing.

As Helpline counsellors provide information and support, clients share their personal stories about their struggles in quitting. These individuals desperately want to quit however coming up with \$60 for a start-up kit of varenicline or \$30-40 for a package of nicotine replacement therapy feels like an insurmountable hurdle and therefore they do not investigate these options further.

When counsellors recommend these effective therapies, we often hear clients express their frustration saying "But they are just too expensive" and "I wouldn't be able to afford it."

Moving forward with this initiative will mean that low-income individuals will have access to the most effective treatment that is currently available to help them overcome this deadly addiction.

Once the cost barrier is eliminated, individuals can then focus their energies on other aspects of their quit plans, such as planning healthier alternatives to manage cravings, accessing support and tips, and planning positive rewards.

The Smokers' Helpline has a very successful CARE Fax Referral Program which was initially launched through the NLMA in 2004. The program has expanded over the years and the Helpline now receives referrals from a wide range of health professionals and community organizations to link individuals with ongoing counselling support from the Helpline.

Doctors continue to be very active with the Fax Referral Program and they are the number one source of referrals to the Helpline. The release of this paper today is an extension of the NLMA and Smokers' Helpline partnership.

The evidence clearly shows that enhancing current cessation initiatives through provision of free cessation aids to those who need it most will maximize successful outcomes.

As an established, successful service with over ten years of experience in providing programs, consultation and leadership in smoking cessation, the Smokers' Helpline is ideally positioned to distribute NRTs to smokers to supplement the counselling intervention.

The Smokers' Helpline certainly acknowledges the great support government has demonstrated for the quitline, with increased investment in the service in recent years.

We now call upon the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to implement this initiative we have put forward today that will help many people take the next step to successfully overcome tobacco addiction.

Thank you.