



**NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**

NLMA delivers infant car seats, calls for bicycle helmet legislation

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St. John's, NL – This year marks the 26th anniversary of the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association's (NLMA) infant car seat program. Each year, physicians of the province provide safe rides home for the first baby born in the New Year at the nine hospitals performing routine deliveries.

“The intent of the NLMA's infant car seat program is to encourage all parents to use approved car seats for their children from the moment they leave hospital as newborns. To date, more than 300 car seats have been presented to families of newborns,” said NLMA President Dr. Tony Gabriel.

Community retailers continue to support the NLMA's program by generously donating infant car seats for babies born in their communities including Wal-Mart stores in Clarenville, Corner Brook, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, Labrador City and Marystown. The St. John's West - Kelsey Drive store provided a seat to the Health Sciences Centre and the St. John's East - Aberdeen Avenue Wal-Mart provided a seat to the Curtis Memorial Hospital in St. Anthony. Goose Sales/Home Hardware also donated a car seat to the hospital in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The NLMA would also like to acknowledge Crosstown Express and Day and Ross Transportation Group for assisting with delivering the car seats.

Government in a position to do more

In 2007, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador amended the *Highway Traffic Act* to require all children to be in a booster seat while they are being transported in a vehicle. Physicians of the province believe government is now in a position to do more to protect children from debilitating and life-threatening injuries.

In keeping with the need to promote child health and safety, the NLMA is again calling on government to amend the *Highway Traffic Act* to make helmet use mandatory for bicycle users of all ages as well as users of other wheeled activities, such as scooters, skateboards and in-line skates.

A 2009 report produced by the Atlantic Collaborative on Injury Prevention and Safe Kids Canada, found that Newfoundland and Labrador had the highest rate of bicycle-related hospitalizations among children in the country. The province's rate was 49.2 hospitalizations per 100,000 people, nearly double the Canadian rate of 25.7. Yet, Newfoundland and Labrador is the only province in Atlantic Canada that has not enacted provincial bicycle helmet legislation. It joins Quebec and Saskatchewan as the only provinces in the country without provincial helmet legislation.

People of the province support legislation

The NLMA has lobbied the provincial government to amend the *Highway Traffic Act* to include legislation for mandatory helmets since 2006.

In August 2010, the NLMA commissioned Corporate Research Associates (CRA) to poll a statistically relevant sample of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to determine their level of support for mandatory helmet legislation. The survey found that 87% of respondents would support legislation making it mandatory for all cyclists in the province to wear a helmet (12% were opposed).

“These survey results are a clear indication that the people of the province believe it is time to proactively introduce mandatory helmet legislation to help reduce the risk of head injuries, especially in children,” said Dr. Gabriel.

“We know from experiences in other provinces that making helmets mandatory increases helmet use, has no affect on recreational or commuting bicycle use and dramatically reduces the number of reported injuries and bicycle-related deaths,” he added.

At the NLMA’s 2010 annual general meeting, a resolution was passed on the need for mandatory provincial helmet legislation. The resolution reads: “Given the personal and economic costs associated with head injuries from bicycle accidents, the NLMA calls on the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to provide a public education program and to legislate the mandatory use of bike helmets for all ages in this province.”

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