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**HEALTH BOARDS ASSOCIATION PRAISES NEW FINANCIAL AND SOCIAL FOCUS AND INITIATIVES**

March 21, 2005: The Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association (NLHBA) says that Budget 2005 looks promising for the coming changes in the structure of the province's health system.

“This is a useful budget for the coming year in which we will be managing change and working to meet Government's objectives,” says John Peddle, NLHBA Executive Director. “The budget offers a good balance, on the one hand investing in existing acute care infrastructure and technology and expanding to new technology and drugs, and on the other hand investing in public health and wellness. It is hoped that wait times will be significantly reduced by the addition of a third MRI in the province as well as other investments targeting access to needed services, such as mental health and addictions services. We welcome the importance placed on increased funding for seniors and the focus on public health and wellness as essential investments for promoting and sustaining the future health of our province. However,” adds Peddle, “it is important to remember that the new Regional Integrated Health Authorities (RIHAs), which take over the health system on April 1, will be facing many challenges over the course of the next year, and will also be asked to find operational savings as part of the restructuring process.”

The Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association represents all the current fourteen Health Boards in the Province and is working with the four RIHAs. All health services and community services, including child, youth and family services, community corrections and youth diversion programs, and adult services, are delivered by Health Boards in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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