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NLIS

December 15, 2003

(Health and Community Services)

(Justice)

(Education)

Ministers announce task force on OxyContin

Elizabeth Marshall, Minister of Health and Community Services, together with Justice Minister Tom Marshall and John Ottenheimer, Minister of Education and Youth Services and Post-Secondary Education, today announced the establishment of a task force on the abuse of OxyContin.

Minister Elizabeth Marshall held a news conference today, with representatives from the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and Addiction Services of Health and Community Services St. John's, to outline government's plans to deal with the abuse of prescription drugs, particularly OxyContin.

"We are very concerned that this province is experiencing a rise in abuse of OxyContin, far beyond that of other provinces," said Minister Elizabeth Marshall. "As a result, we have established a task force, with representatives from the justice, education and health and community services sectors, to develop a comprehensive strategy for the management of OxyContin and other related narcotics abuse."

Members of the task force are Beverley Clarke, CEO, Health and Community Services St. John's (Chair); Dr. Thomas Cantwell, Clinical Chief of Mental Health, Health Care Corporation of St. John's; Joe Browne, Deputy Chief, Royal Newfoundland Constabulary; Ralph Alcock, Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Protection, Department of Justice; Brenda Smith, Director of Student Support Services, Department of Education; and Margo Priddle, Pharmacy Consultant, Treasury Board.

Minister Tom Marshall stated that "it is important for us all to work collaboratively on the issue of drug abuse. It is not only a criminal issue, but also a public health and education issue. We need to protect the health and well-being of our citizens while ensuring they have the appropriate knowledge to make the right decisions."

As a first step, the task force has arranged for the delivery of education and awareness sessions in schools throughout the province. Teams comprised of representatives from the police and addictions sectors will be meeting with students to provide teens with information on the dangers associated with the abuse of OxyContin and where supports can be accessed should they have concerns.

"I am pleased these education sessions will be taking place," said Minister Ottenheimer. "We want our youth to have information on the effects drug abuse can have on their lives and to assist them in making healthy choices."

The task force has sought the assistance of Purdue Pharma, the manufacturer of the drug OxyContin, to enhance education and awareness and work with our partners in the justice, medical and pharmaceutical fields to curtail the inappropriate use of the drug. A representative of the Canadian branch of this company will be visiting the province to meet with officials this week.

The task force will present an interim report to government outlining immediate actions by the end of January 2004, with a final report to be delivered by March 2004.

Minister Elizabeth Marshall called upon community partners to assist in providing the public with information about abuse of OxyContin. She also noted that when used appropriately, prescription

drugs such as OxyContin prove to be effective in helping those who need it.

Information about OxyContin is available at www.gov.nl.ca/oxyinfo

Support services for those with addiction problems can be accessed via the Recovery Centre in Pleasantville, (709) 738-4980 or the Mental Health Crisis Line 1-888-737-4668.

Media contact:

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BACKGROUNDER
Terms of Reference
TASK FORCE ON THE ABUSE OF OXYCONTIN

The task force is a collaborative partnership of the departments of Health and Community Services, Justice and Education related to the abuse of OxyContin. The lead department will be Health and Community Services.

MANDATE:

- To make recommendations on a comprehensive strategy for the management of OxyContin and other related narcotics abuse.

PHASE I:

- Prepare an interim report with recommendations for short-term solutions by January 31, 2004.

PHASE II:

Roles and Responsibilities:

- The task Force will be responsible for:
 - (a) Identification of the nature and extent of the problem related to OxyContin abuse
 - (b) Identification of best practices related to:
 - Prevention
 - Education
 - Detoxification
 - Treatment
 - Harm Reduction
 - (c) Make recommendations to limit unauthorized access and inappropriate use of

OxyContin and other related narcotics

(d) Liaise with appropriate stakeholders, professional associations and experts, in particular physicians, pharmacists, police and addictions treatment specialists

(e) Provide a final report with recommendations by March 31, 2004

MEMBERSHIP:

The task force will be chaired by Beverley Clarke, Chief Executive Officer, Health and Community Services, St. John's Region.

Other members are:

- Dr. Thomas Cantwell, Clinical Chief of Mental Health, Health Care Corporation of St. John's
- Joe Browne, Deputy Chief, Royal Newfoundland Constabulary
- Ralph Alcock, Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Protection, Department of Justice
- Brenda Smith, Director of Student Support Services, Department of Education
- Margo Priddle, Pharmacy Consultant, Treasury Board.

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