

NEWS

Last updated at 9:03 AM on 15/09/08

Jones angry with increases in prescription dispensing fees 📄

Northern Pen

Opposition Leader Yvonne Jones says it is completely unacceptable that Labrador-Grenfell Health is increasing the prescription dispensing fees paid by patients living in communities in Southern Labrador.

She says the fees will now increase from as low as \$2 per prescription to \$8.50.

There are no local retail pharmacies in Southern Labrador from L'Anse au Clair to Charlottetown. As a result, patients are forced to purchase their prescriptions at the local health clinic. She suggests Labrador-Grenfell Health didn't consult with patients before indicating fees will increase effective Oct. 1, 2008.

"People in Southern Labrador are very upset with the decision by Labrador-Grenfell Health to increase the prescription dispensing fees," states Ms. Jones. "There was no consultation with area residents and patients are worried as to what these fee increases will mean for their monthly medication bills. Many of these people are seniors or on a limited income and cannot afford a \$6 increase per prescription, especially when there are several that must be filled each month.

The Cartwright-L'Anse au Clair MHA says while Labrador-Grenfell Health has told her the increases are necessary to bring Southern Labrador fees in line with the rest of Labrador, there could have been more consultation with local patients to look for solutions and help people adjust to these dramatic fee increases. Instead, she says, residents of Southern Labrador will be forced to sacrifice other necessities in order to afford their prescription medications.

"I am calling on Labrador-Grenfell Health to reconsider this decision and look for options that will help patients during this transition. Three weeks notice is certainly not enough, especially when residents were not consulted."

In response to the criticism levelled by Ms. Jones, Labrador-Grenfell Health says it recognizes the higher fees will negatively impact residents of southern and southeast Labrador. However, Boyd Rowe, chief executive officer, says it's important to have consistent dispensing fees in all areas.

"It's really a matter of fairness," he notes. "We have people in neighbouring communities, such as Black Tickle and Cartwright, who are paying the higher fees, just as people in communities where there are pharmacies are paying the dispensing fees."

Mr. Rowe notes that in addition to making dispensing fees uniform effective Oct. 1, the regional health authority has reorganized its billing and charging procedure for people in southern and southeast Labrador who have private insurance.

Within the next few weeks, clients who deal with third-party billing won't have to pay for medical services up front and get reimbursed later. He says the arrangement that's in place in other areas of the region is being implemented in southern and southeast Labrador.



YVONNE JONES

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