



*For immediate release*

## **Hope Air announces further changes to its charity service in Newfoundland and Labrador**

Toronto, ON – September 30, 2015 – Hope Air is very disappointed to announce further necessary changes to its charity Flights program for residents of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). During the first nine months of 2015, Hope Air has provided over 1,400 free Flights for low-income individuals and families resident in NL. This is a 180 per cent increase over the same period in 2014. These Flights have ensured equal access to medical care which all Canadians deserve under our healthcare system. However, since program restrictions were announced in late May 2015, the number of requests by residents of the province for assistance to travel to vital medical appointments has continued unabated. This now means that Hope Air must impose different restrictions at this time as the donated resources it has available from the generous private sector (Service Clubs, individuals, businesses, private foundations) in the province are being exceeded and the continued demand for our services is not currently sustainable.

Effective immediately, Hope Air's charity Flights program in Newfoundland and Labrador will be impacted as follows:

- Hope Air will no longer be able to provide a free Flight for a medical escort accompanying adult Clients on any routes (within the province or for out-of-province flights; however one escort per child Client will continue for eligible Flights granted);
- The following residents of NL are no longer eligible for free Flights from Hope Air:
  - Income Support recipients, as their medical travel costs may be funded by the Department of Advanced Education and Skills (NL);
  - NL residents who may receive funding for medical travel from Federal or Provincial Departments, Agencies, Boards or Commissions such as Workplace Health, Safety & Compensation Commission or Regional Health Authorities; and
  - Bone Marrow/Stem Cell and Organ Donors who may receive financial assistance for medical travel through the Eastern Regional Health Authority.
- Flight Requests should be submitted to Hope Air no less than three (3) weeks in advance of the date for travel to the medical appointment to be eligible for consideration, as this will enable Hope Air, if it grants the Flight Request, to purchase such Flight at the lowest advance fare price available;
- Flight Requests for out-of-province travel, and Flight Requests for surgery appointments, will be given priority for consideration (but not guaranteed to be granted); and
- The suspension announced on May 29, 2015 for Flights on the Deer Lake to/from St. John's route and the St. Anthony to/from St. John's route is rescinded and NL residents may now apply for Flights on those routes but will be subject to the same criteria as set out above and the resources available to Hope Air generally.

Hope Air has always applied a financial means test for individuals to qualify for a free Flight. In light of the constrained resources available to Hope Air at this time, additional financial means review inquiries (including review of the above eligibility criteria) will be applied by Hope Air for all Flight Requests by NL residents. This will entail additional questions regarding income levels and sources of income. We appreciate our Clients' patience and openness during these review discussions.

The review and decision in respect of any and all Flight Requests under these new guidelines will be undertaken by a NL Review Panel comprised of at least three Hope Air staff and Volunteers to ensure the most open, balanced and caring review possible; but in the end, all decisions are at the sole discretion of Hope Air and will unfortunately be restricted to the resources this charity has available to it through its generous donors.

These guidelines and processes are intended to ensure that the Flights Hope Air are able to provide will be allocated to those who do not have government programs which may otherwise assist them or for those where reimbursement by the NL government under the MTAP may greatly assist in alleviating the financial strain incurred by NL residents. Hope Air understands and appreciates that the government assistance programs may not adequately address the financial burden NL residents face for their medical transportation, or that flying to appointments may not be granted under a government program but that ground transportation may be the only alternative. This gap in the access to medical treatment is of great concern to Hope Air and we will continue to advocate for change on behalf of everyone.

Hope Air is seeking all avenues of support through discussions with the Provincial Government, the aviation sector, the corporate community and through donations by generous corporations, individuals, foundations and Service Clubs in the province. With sufficiently increased support, Hope Air will be able to reinstate service to its full extent at an early opportunity.

Your donations for the **NL FLIGHTS OF HOPE FUND** can be made at [www.hopeair.ca](http://www.hopeair.ca).

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