hcsminister@gov.nl.ca

Feel free to modify or add personal reasons for writing if you like.

**Email subject line: Women in NL deserve a chance to find breast cancer early**

Dear Minister,

I am reaching out to express my deep concern about breast cancer screening practices in NL that are

putting women’s lives at risk.

**The Issue: Women with dense breasts are left unprotected**

Mammography alone is often insufficient for women with dense breast tissue. Dense tissue appears white on a mammogram—just like cancer—masking up to 40% of cancers in the densest breasts. As a result, too many cancers are only discovered once a woman feels a lump, after a “normal” mammogram. These cancers are typically diagnosed at later stages, leading to more aggressive treatments, higher mortality, and poorer quality of life. Supplementary screening tools such as ultrasound and MRI can reveal cancers that mammography misses. Yet, in NL, women are denied access to these life-saving tools.

**The problem with current policy**
The provincial screening program maintains there is “insufficient evidence” to recommend additional screening. This is misleading. For over four decades, [multi-centre trials](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/1148330) and large observational studies have shown that supplemental screening with ultrasound finds cancers that mammograms miss. More recently, Randomized Controlled Trials in Japan and the Netherlands have confirmed that [ultrasound](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26547101/) and [MRI](https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1903986) substantially increase early detection among women with dense breasts. Despite overwhelming evidence of the benefits, the government refuses to provide essential additional screening, leaving women at greater risk of delayed diagnoses and poorer outcomes.

**PEI is falling behind**
Other provinces recognize the importance of supplementary screening:

* **BC, Alberta, and NWT:** Provide screening ultrasounds for women with dense breasts (categories C and D).
* **Ontario:** Offers annual ultrasounds for Category D and MRIs every two years, plus ultrasounds for Category C.
* **Quebec:** Screens Category D women with a family history.
* **Saskatchewan:** Recently moved to improve dense breast screening access.

In NL, there is still *no* access to supplementary screening for women with dense breasts—leaving women vulnerable to delayed diagnoses.

**The economic argument: early detection saves money**
Treating breast cancer diagnosed at Stage 1 costs roughly $39,000; at Stage 4, it can exceed $370,000. Investing in early detection not only saves lives—it reduces the strain on our healthcare system.

**What must change**
Women in NL deserve the same chance to find breast cancer early as women elsewhere in Canada. I urge you to:

* Make supplementary screening ultrasound or MRI available to women with dense breasts.
* Update provincial screening guidelines to reflect the current evidence.

It’s time to close this dangerous gap in care. Will you commit to making this a reality?

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]
[Your Riding / City]