

Together we stand:
Class-action launched by group of women in Lab West successful

In 2003, a group of women discovered they'd been exposed to improperly sterilized gynecological instruments in Labrador West. Though none of them became ill as a result, they were horrified and angered by the news. They banded together and launched a class-action suit against Health Labrador Corporation. In August of 2007, the judge reached a settlement decision.

Health Labrador will have to pay for almost \$179,500 to the 327 people affected by the use of unsterilized equipment at the Captain William Jackman Memorial Hospital between 2001 and 2003.

Each patient will receive \$450 while spouses will get \$100. Health Labrador will also have to pay for the plaintiff's legal fees up to \$93,571.50.

In an interview with the *Telegram*, Brenda Rideout, who initiated the lawsuit, said, "I'm pleased with it, because this was never about financial gain. The main objective was to identify what happened and why it happened and rectify it. A little bit of closure is nice," said Rideout.

Although individual amounts are small, Health Labrador is required to make a number of non-financial concessions. They include:

- Health Labrador must take out ads in both *The Aurora* and *53 North Magazine* explaining changes that have taken place in connection with the sterilization issue. That ad is also to include an apology to the people affected by the case.
- Health Labrador CEO Boyd Rowe has to be made available to the media to talk about "changes in sterilization procedures" and to offer a further apology.
- A community representative must be appointed by Health Labrador to the environmental services team "responsible for developing infection control processes."
- The insurer for Health Labrador has to conduct an educational seminar about infection control.

We can only hope the bravery of these women and the outcome of their case will help keep healthcare providers on their toes.