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Media Release

It's a good time to quit – Thunder Bay's tobacco cessation organizations band together to educate and support smokers trying to quit

(Thunder Bay, ON – Tuesday, January 10, 2012) Today, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre's (TBRHSC) Chronic Disease Prevention and Management team joined with local tobacco cessation organizations for the Thunder Bay launch of *The Driven to Quit Challenge* – an invitation to Ontario tobacco users to break their addiction for the chance to win a new car, dream vacation, or cash.

"Tobacco use is among the leading risk factors for chronic disease and a major cause of cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and respiratory disease. The use of tobacco products is known to be one of the primary avoidable causes of cardiovascular disease and the most important cause of preventable early cancer deaths," says Dr. Christopher Lai. "By working together with community partners like the Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU), the Canadian Cancer Society (CCS), and Tobacco Free Thunder Bay, we can reach more Northwestern Ontario citizens and provide the education and supports they need to help break the cycle of tobacco addiction."

Long-time local tobacco cessation advocate Simon Hoad, currently the Senior Coordinator for the CCS Smokers' Helpline, is excited about Northwestern Ontario's (NWO) participation rates in The Challenge. "The 2011 Northwestern Ontario recruitment of almost twice the percentage of the rest of the province tells us two things: our smokers want to get out of their commercial tobacco use, and the Driven to Quit Challenge is a powerful motivator for action."

The Driven to Quit Challenge, funded annually by the Government of Ontario, is open to Ontarians aged 19 and over who used tobacco at least 10 months in 2011. Those who stay smoke-free for the month of March can win their choice of a new Ford Fusion hybrid or Ford Edge. Other prizes include two \$5,000 travel vouchers and seven prizes of \$2,000 cash.

And that's not all. Northwestern Region participants in Driven to Quit are eligible for special local prizes. Dr. Jim Morris, Tobacco Treatment Specialist at Regional Cancer Care but better known as The Quit Coach™ says, "Our local business community has been on board with Tobacco Free Thunder Bay from the start. They continue to encourage and motivate smokers by donating prizes to add extra incentive for NWO tobacco users."



Courage and support from Dr. Morris helped local smoker June Bjorn to say goodbye to smoking: “I thought the cravings would be overwhelming. I thought I’d feel out of the loop by not gathering outside with the smokers. I thought maybe I didn’t really want to quit, so why even try and then fail. Turns out I tried and I succeeded!” Now June feels better, has no more cravings, doesn’t miss the cold outdoor smoking huddle, and loves being a non-smoker.

With National Non-Smoking Week set to start on January 15, the Thunder Bay District Health Unit encourages local and regional residents to get ready to kick the habit. “We have participated in promoting the Driven to Quit contest since its inception, and have found that it is a unique and effective way to encourage smokers to quit,” says Ken Ranta, Director of Health Promotion at the Thunder Bay District Health Unit. “Last year more than 1,100 smokers in the Thunder Bay District registered for this contest, showing that there is a definite desire for smokers in our area to quit. We are looking to reach even more this year.”

Don’t wait, it’s a good time to quit.

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Regional Cancer Care Northwest (RCC-NW) delivers high-quality cancer services to approximately 250,000 residents spanning across the Northwest region of Ontario. We are one of 14 Regional Cancer Programs in the province, operating in partnership with Cancer Care Ontario and TBRHSC. Our cancer care services span 13 affiliated sites, including community hospitals and health access centres located across the region.

The Driven to Quit Challenge is hosted by the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario Division, with funding from the Government of Ontario and generous prize support from McNeil Consumer Healthcare, a wholly owned subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson Inc. The Driven to Quit Challenge is presented in collaboration with local public health departments across the province. <http://www.driventoquit.ca/english/home/index.php>.

Canadian Cancer Society Smokers’ Helpline is a free, confidential service that provides personalized support, advice and information about quitting smoking and tobacco use. Operated by the Canadian Cancer Society and funded by Government of Ontario, Smokers’ Helpline has three ways to help Ontarians quit: phone support, online program, and text messaging at 1 877 513-5333 and SmokersHelpline.ca.