Please copy and email letter to: health.minister@novascotia.ca and premier@novascotia.ca

Feel free to modify or add personal reasons for writing

**Email subject line: Nova Scotians deserve a chance to find breast cancer early**

**Dear [Representative's Name],**

I am reaching out to convey my concern about breast cancer screening practices in Nova Scotia that are failing women and costing lives.

**The Issue: Women with Dense Breasts Are Denied Life-Saving Screening**

Mammography is not enough for women with dense breasts. Dense tissue appears white on a mammogram—just like cancer—creating a masking effect that hides up to 40% of cancers in the densest breasts. Tragically, these cancers are often only discovered when a woman feels a lump after a “normal” mammogram. The cancers are frequently diagnosed at later stages, requiring mastectomy, chemotherapy, and leading to worse prognoses. Supplementary screening methods like ultrasound and MRI can detect cancers missed by mammography. Yet, Nova Scotia denies access to these essential tools.

**The Problem with Nova Scotia’s Policy**

The provincial screening program claims there is “insufficient evidence” to recommend additional screening. This statement is misleading. For the past 40 years, [multi-centre trials](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/1148330) have shown that supplemental screening with ultrasound finds cancers that mammograms miss. Randomized Controlled Trials in Japan and the Netherlands have further demonstrated the clear benefits of [ultrasound](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26547101/) and [MRI](https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1903986)in finding early-stage cancers in 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.

**Other jurisdictions in Canada already recognize the urgency of supplementary screening**

* **British Columbia, Alberta, and NWT:** Offer screening ultrasounds for women with dense breasts (Categories C and D).
* **Ontario:** Provides annual ultrasounds for Category D and biannual MRIs, with ultrasounds for Category C.
* **Quebec:** Screens Category D women with a family history.
* **PEI:** Has committed to providing ultrasounds for Category D women.

Nova Scotia? There is no access to supplementary screening for dense breasts. Only women deemed “high risk” (over 25% lifetime risk) can access MRI.

**The Financial Case: Finding Cancer Early Saves Money**

Early detection isn’t just life-saving; it’s cost-effective. Treating Stage 1 cancer averages $39,000, compared to $371,000 for Stage 4. Investing in supplementary screening saves lives and reduces healthcare costs.

**What Needs to Change**

The Government of Nova Scotia must act now. Ensure that women with dense breasts have access to screening ultrasound or MRI. It’s time to prioritize early detection, prevent needless suffering, and save lives. Nova Scotians deserve better. Will you commit to making this a reality?

**Sincerely,**
[Your Name]
[Your Riding]