



## Message from the Chair

It is estimated that one in eight women in our province will have breast cancer at some point in their lives. The majority of them will have a dramatically increased risk of lymphedema as a result of their cancer treatment. Few will know much about this troublesome side effect until they actually experience it. Research now shows that exercise and a healthy lifestyle can help fight breast cancer and lymphedema. Breast cancer survivors across the country have discovered a wonderful way to exercise and at the same time, have the time of their lives - dragon boat racing!

Six months ago, a small group of people came together to see if we could bring dragon boat racing to breast cancer survivors in Newfoundland and Labrador. At that point, most of us knew very little about what many paddlers call "Riding the Dragon". From our very first meeting however, we were captivated by the power of the experience described in videos, journals and web sites alike.

What struck us most was the passion displayed by paddlers who were living with breast cancer. They spoke of strength and power; of health and healing; of friendships that would support them and enrich the rest of their lives.

We quickly realized that we wanted to share in this experience too. So began months of planning and organizing, which have brought us to this first real milestone - the official launch of dragon boating here on the Avalon.

Our talented, hard-working support organization has succeeded in building a solid foundation. We now have our first corporate sponsors as well as a number of eager supporters ready to come on board. We have our very own website, awesome promotional material, a great training facility, as well as a place to store our forty foot long dragon boat when it is built! We have our first twenty paddlers complete with trainer and we even have a nationally renowned artist to design the dragon's head and tail!

But this is just the beginning. We plan to be the first team in Canada to build our own dragon boat. It will be in the water, ready for paddlers, when the ice melts next spring. We plan to have a team strong in numbers, bodies and spirit. They will likely vary in age, fitness levels and paddling skills, but their personal experience with breast cancer will unite them. The team will be ready to compete in their first dragon boat festival next summer and in the first Atlantic dragon boat festival scheduled for Nova Scotia the following summer. Public recruitment for team members begins in a few weeks and training starts in January. Fundraising and volunteer recruitment has already begun. We welcome you to join us if you think you might be able to help in any way.

We believe that the Avalon Dragon Boating Team will send a powerful message that people living with breast cancer can lead full, active, healthy lives. In doing so, its members will become a source of hope and inspiration to others who are just starting their cancer journey.

Julie Bettney, Chair,  
Avalon Dragon Boating