

Opposition seeking change

By KAREN WELLS

THE PILOT

LEWISPORTE DISTRICT – Opposition Leader Yvonne Jones says the Private Members Bill calling on the provincial government to reverse recent announcements related to eliminating some health care services will be the first thing she presents when the House of Assembly sits again in November.

On Sept. 8 Ms. Jones tabled the Private Members Motion that resulted from a meeting she had with Town of Lewisporte and community representatives while attending the Sept. 3 public protest in the community. She had been asked by those taking part in the meeting what the Opposition could do to help in the effort to have the decision to close the Lewisporte Laboratory (testing and analysis component) and X-Ray Clinic reversed.

“So I laid out a number of things we can do – present petitions on your behalf in the legislature, ask questions of the government and the other thing, we can table a bill in the house and debate in which it requires every member to stand and be noted on how you vote,” said Ms. Jones. “That was one of the things they specifically asked that we would do.

“With their input we drafted a bill and introduced it in the House of Assembly when we sat the last time. We will get to debate that motion on the first Private Members Day when the House reopens – the first private members day. Government has private members day one week, we have it the next week, so the first opportunity that we have to call a bill it will be this bill and we will call it for debate.”

Ms. Jones is holding out hope that the decision for Lewisporte and Flower's Cove (where cuts are also scheduled) can be changed.

“I certainly do (hope it can be reversed) for the sake of the people who live in those communities and for being able to maintain the integrity of rural health care in the province – I think it's very important,” she said. “This is a bigger issue than two communities right now.

“This is a government that I feel has an agenda to gut rural healthcare across Newfoundland and Labrador. And if they did not have that as part of their agenda, why would they be out there asking all of these boards to provide these cost-cutting measures which you know and I know is all coming out of rural areas. We're not seeing a lot of these recommendations based around central-

ized or larger hospitals – it's (cuts) are all based around the more remote diagnostic services and more remote clinical and primary care operations in the province.

“I am hoping when the House of Assembly opens in November that I won't have to call this bill. I am hoping that government will reverse its decision and we won't need to debate it. If they don't reverse their decision it will be the first bill that I will call as Leader of the Opposition.”

Ms. Jones is still fielding concerns from people worried about the future delivery of their healthcare services.

“I am still hearing from people in Lewisporte and the outlying communities on a regular basis,” said Ms. Jones. “I have been in communication with a number of them in terms of what we can do in providing support to them on this issue.

“But we are hearing from people from all across this province. It's amazing the number of people who have called or sent emails just expressing their concern for what is happening in the Lewisporte and Flower's Cove area, simply because they feel they could be next and I think everybody has an invested interest in seeing that government reverses this decision right now.”