

Cameron report dominates question period

Liberals want government to move on legislative changes

BY DAVE BARTLETT dbartlett@thetelegram.com

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Opposition opened the spring session of the House of Assembly with a barrage of questions on recommendations contained in the Cameron report.

The report, released earlier this month, made 60 recommendations in the wake of a scandal which saw hundreds of breast cancer patients get inaccurate hormone receptor test results which affected their treatment.

Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones wanted to know when the recommendations would be implemented and how much they would cost.

Health Minister Ross Wiseman replied by saying the province had already started putting some of the recommendations in place.

He said he should have an action plan to put the recommendations in place tabled in the House before the end of the spring sitting.

Wiseman estimated the recommendations will cost about \$100 million.

Jones called the problems with hormone receptor testing the "tip of the iceberg" when it comes to problems within the health-care system.

But Wiseman assured Jones quality control in health care is the "primary consideration" of the government.

What about excluded victims?

Jones also asked if the province will compensate any victims that Eastern Health's insurance company excludes.

Premier Danny Williams said the province must allow the process of determining liability and compensation to take place.

Liberal justice critic Kelvin Parsons asked a number of times if any of the legislative changes recommended by Justice Margaret Cameron would be coming before the House closes this summer.

The report recommends changes to the Evidence Act and the Public Inquiries Act as well as the creation of apology legislation.

It was the new legislation Parsons focused on.

Justice Minister Tom Marshall said the province has been looking at legislation in the six jurisdictions of the country which already have apology legislation.

"That investigation will help inform the government as it makes decisions on how to move forward," he said.

"The whole idea of the legislation is to say to someone to take the responsibility for what they've done, to express remorse, to express contrition and the legislation will ensure that such an apology will not be an admission of liability," Marshall continued.

But Parsons called that a nonanswer and asked if the legislation would be coming this session or not.

He suggested the government should get a move on with both apology and whistleblower legislation, which has been promised since the last provincial election.

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“ We haven’t seen the promised whistleblower legislation which was promised some two years ago,” Parsons said.

He also said a culture of secrecy remains in the health-care system.

Marshall repeated a review of how both those laws work in other jurisdictions is ongoing.

Parsons pointed out the government was able to pass the Abitibi expropriation legislation in an afternoon and suggested there’s no reason for any more delay.