

Liberals continue to accuse health minister of being out of touch

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Liberal

Leader Yvonne Jones says Health Minister Ross Wiseman should have a better grasp of what's going on in the province's health system.

On Tuesday in the House of Assembly, Jones grilled Wiseman over the resignation of the only nurse practitioner who works at the clinic for HIV and AIDS patients.

Wiseman wasn't aware of the resignation at the time.

On Wednesday, Jones asked the minister about the province's only hyperbaric chamber — a pressurized chamber used to treat things like carbon monoxide poisoning and decompression sickness related to diving.

"Our sources have been telling us that this chamber is not ready to go," Jones told reporters outside of the House.

Jones said if a patient needs to be placed in such a chamber they would have to be medevaced to Toronto or Montreal because the chamber in Halifax is also not currently working.

"This is a minister that almost any day you can pick an issue in the healthcare system that is affecting the lives of people in the province, stand in the House and question him and he doesn't know what the situation is," Jones said.

But Wiseman shrugged off Jones' criticism when he spoke to reporters.

He said Jones is confused between day to day operations, which he said are the responsibility of the individual health authorities, and what he does as minister.

"It's a part of a test, I guess, to see if I know what's happening on a day to day basis," said Wiseman.

But Jones said the issues she's been bringing up are things the minister should be on top of. "I know the minister likes to refer to these things as operational issues, but they're issues that affect the lives of people," she said.

Wiseman did give reporters an update on the HIV/AIDS clinic staffing issue Wednesday.

"As I understand it, Eastern Health, in fact, were in meetings midday today about that very issue," he said.

He said the authority is exploring a couple of options to deal with the resignation of the nurse practitioner.

And Wiseman said he hopes Eastern Health will make an announcement by early next week about the clinic.

He also said the authority is actively trying to recruit an infectious disease specialist to replace the one who resigned from the same clinic earlier this year.

Wiseman previously stated in the House that doctors from out of the province will periodically visit the clinic to do locums until a permanent doctor can be found.