

Call-centre subsidy program under review: Skinner

Liberals ask government about subsidies in wake of second closure

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The global recession is having an impact on call centres in this province, according to Liberal Kelvin Parsons.

On Thursday in the House of Assembly, Parsons asked Innovation Minister Shawn Skinner if call centres were appealing to him for help, considering two have closed in the province in the last year.

TeleTech in Mount Pearl will shut down Aug. 20, putting 279 people out of work.

Last June, the ICT Group call centre in Carbonear also shut down.

Parsons told the House the Liberals have received calls from employees at other call centres who are worried their jobs may also be in jeopardy.

But Skinner wouldn't comment on the business of private companies.

"I don't feel it would be appropriate for me here in the House to discuss the business of those other contact centres," he said.

Right to know

But Parsons noted public money has gone to subsidize the pay of employees at some call centres, and therefore people have a right to know if the government is aware of more impending closures.

He also quizzed the minister about a possible review of the subsidy program.

"The minister recently stated that the current subsidy program may need be reviewed to see what improvements can be made," said Parsons.

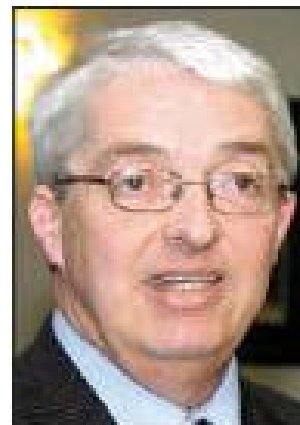
Skinner said he would speak to public money, but not on the confidential workings of private companies.

He said he's recently visited a number of centres to speak with management to see if changes are needed to the provincial program.

"Based upon the feedback that I've received, we may be making some changes in the future," he said.

Parsons also wanted to know if any call centres were looking for more government money to keep them afloat.

Skinner said he's had no direct communication from call centres looking for financial help.



Kelvin Parsons