

Opposition calls for sweeping review

BYROBANTLE TRANSCONTINENTAL MEDIA

The Telegram

ST. JOHN'S — The province's two opposition parties are calling for a sweeping review of the Newfoundland and Labrador health system.

The calls come in the wake of Health Minister Paul Oram's comments Monday that ballooning health expenditures could lead to cuts.

Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones said government decision-making on health spending has been "ad hoc," and it's time for a broader look at the system.

"Why not do a full review and find out what are the that are contributing to that? Is there a way that we can make savings?"

Oram said health-care spending is \$1 billion higher than it was five years ago.

Jones charged that the Tory administration jacked up spending to levels Oram now says are not sustainable, without achieving the desired results.

"It was their government who made the decision to spend that money year over year in health care and to determine where that money should be allocated within the system," the Liberal leader noted.

"And what I'm hearing today, in statements like that, is they've made some wrong decisions and some wrong investments."

NDP Leader Lorraine Michael said Oram's press conference Monday only served to show "a healthcare system in major distress."

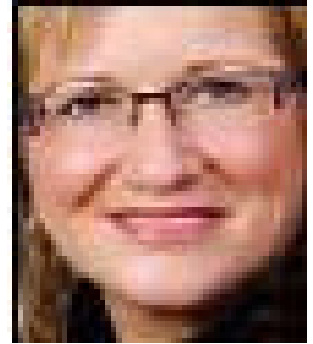
The health minister released documents from health authorities outlining potential cuts to achieve budget savings — everything from axing clinic services in Churchill Falls to closing eight long-term care beds on the rural Avalon to cutting 24-hour on-site emergency service in Old Perlican, St. Lawrence and Whitbourne.

"What it presents is a health-care system that is down to the skeleton," Michael said. "There's no fat left on the bone, there's no flesh left on the bone at all. And the cuts that are being suggested in response to the demand from government are cuts that are actually eating right into the skeleton of our health-care system itself."

There should be a "full-scale review, with external consultation, of our whole health-care system," Michael added.

She said that review should include input from the health authorities and communities that will be affected.

"We have got to make our healthcare system work, and right now it is not working."



Yvonne Jones