



Last updated at 2:49 PM on 12/01/10

## What's the plan?

### Lack of progress on long-term care facility shocks Butler

DENISE PIKE  
The Compass

Roland Butler says the people of Conception Bay North need some straight answers from government on what's happening with the planning and development for the long-term care facility, to be located adjacent to the Carbonear General Hospital.

The MHA for the Port de Grave district, says not one cent of the \$500,000 allocated in the 2009- 2010 provincial budget for the planning process for the facility has been used.

He says he received confirmation from Don Keats, deputy minister of Health and Community Services, in a letter dated Dec. 22, 2009 that none of the design and planning work had been completed on the project and none of the funding had been spent.

The letter was in response to a Nov. 4 request, under the access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, from Butler.

The Compass obtained copies of both letters. In his Nov. 4 letter Butler stated:

"I am requesting under the Access to Information Act a breakdown of funding allocated in Budget 2009-2010 for the proposed long-term care facility in Carbonear. This request also includes the amount spent to date and a breakdown of that spending."

On Dec. 22. Keats responded:

"Please be advised that \$500,000 has been allocated in the 2009/2010 budget for planning the construction of a new long-term care facility in Carbonear. As of today's dates a formal plan for the allocation of funds has not been developed nor have any of the budgeted funds been spent. Therefore there are no documents in the control or custody of the department that are responsive to your request for information."

Butler claims the information provided by Keats contradicts statements made by Health and Community Services Minister Jerome Kennedy in the House of Assembly Dec. 17, 2009.

Shocked

"On that day I asked the minister for an update on the project and he said it was proceeding along." says Butler. "He was quite pleased about it and to tell the truth I was tickled to death and applauded it as well. But when I found out none of the \$500,000 had been spent and work didn't seem to be moving ahead on the project I was shocked."

In the Dec. 17 transcript of Hansard (official transcript of the House of Assembly proceedings) Kennedy stated:

"I am very pleased to announce that the planning and design is proceeding. In fact it was not too long ago, if the honourable member had watched Ed Swain on NTV news he would have seen Ed there at the facility in Carbonear showing where we were going to put the long-term care. The consultants were there with us that day, the mayor of the town was there (Sam Slade) and everyone was very happy. It is going to be a state-of-the-art facility and it is going to be one that the people of Carbonear-Harbour Grace area will be very proud of."

Purposely withheld

Butler feels the response to his request for an update on the status of long-term care facility by the department of Health was purposely withheld until after the fall sitting of the House of Assembly closed Dec. 21.

"The House closed one day and I received the letter the next," says Butler. "The timing of that seems to be more than just a coincidence, especially after I had brought the issue up in the House Dec. 17."

Butler wants Kennedy to explain why none of the allocated funds have been spent to begin the planning and construction process of the facility.

"If the money for the planning of this project was allocated in this year's budget, why isn't it being spent?" he asks. "This is a critical piece of infrastructure that is needed by residents in the area and any unnecessary delays will continue to inconvenience many seniors and their families. It is no longer acceptable to continue sending patients from our region to St. John's or other communities to receive these vital services. Instead of providing more rhetoric, the minister must give some timeframes as to when people will finally start seeing some progress on this facility."