

Jones, Williams spar over hospital repairs

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The Newfoundland and Labrador government was accused Tuesday of shortchanging the health care system by failing to repair crumbling hospitals.

Liberal Opposition leader Yvonne Jones said the Conservative government is falling well short of what's needed to maintain major hospitals in St. John's. Premier Danny Williams responded by saying more money will be forthcoming.

Jones said the government has ignored a three-year-old report that shows hospitals in the St. John's region alone need more than \$100 million in urgent repairs.

"We have seen two budgets ... brought to this house by the government opposite since these reports were tabled with the department of health and community services, yet they haven't been addressed," she said.

Williams said that while the reports are three years old, he only learned of their existence last fall — and then, only in a general way.

Now that the full scope of the problem is clear, Williams said, his government will come up with more money.

"Mr. Speaker, I have to honestly say there is never enough money to deal with all the problems in maintenance and repair, he said.

The budget for hospital maintenance will increase to more than \$20 million, which Williams said was enough to deal with any crisis situations.