

# Liberals cite cancer inquiry conflict

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Opposition Liberals are calling on the Newfoundland and Labrador government to sever ties between a top official and the Cameron inquiry on breast cancer testing.



*Premier Danny Williams says Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones's questions on the breast cancer inquiry were shameful.*  
(CBC)

Premier Danny Williams, meanwhile, has asked his justice minister to inquire whether government ought to be even answering questions about the issue while a judicial inquiry is proceeding.

Opposition leader Yvonne Jones said Robert Thompson, a former deputy minister of health, should have no further involvement with the judicial inquiry.

Last spring, government appointed Thompson, at the time the clerk of the executive council and the province's top-ranking civil servant, to organize the inquiry.

In the legislature Tuesday, Jones said Thompson is in a conflict of interest.

"I ask the premier, will you remove Mr. Thompson from his position as government liaison to the commission of inquiry knowing that he has been subpoenaed to testify," Jones said.

Williams vigorously rejected the suggestion.



*Opposition leader Yvonne Jones argues Robert Thompson, a former deputy minister of health, should no longer have any role with the Cameron inquiry.*  
(CBC)

"He is singularly in my opinion, in our opinion as a government, the best person in that position right now, in the best interests of the public," Williams said.

Williams lashed back at what he called "shameful" questioning from the Liberals, whom he said were trying to smear senior health officials.

"Now [they] are going to try and smear Robert Thompson. Well, shame on you," Williams said.

## **Discovered missing e-mails**

Last week, Thompson alerted a lawyer representing the government at the inquiry that he had found several e-mails connected to the hormone receptor issue. A subsequent search, conducted during a four-day hiatus of hearings, found about 40 e-mails and documents.

Outside the house of assembly on Tuesday, Williams said he has asked Justice Minister Jerome Kennedy to approach the inquiry to ask whether the government should stop answering questions about the matter in the legislature and in the media.

Kennedy also felt Jones and Opposition house leader Kelvin Parsons had crossed a line with questions about Thompson.

"This is an ill-conceived or misconceived attempt to smear Mr. Thompson's reputation," Kennedy said. With a barb aimed at Parsons, he added, "You're not judge and jury."

Justice Margaret Cameron began hearing evidence in March on what went wrong at an Eastern Health pathology lab during 1997 and 2005, involving hundreds of hormone receptor test results.