

# LOCAL NEWS

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## Jones says government commitment to openness a sham

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Opposition Leader Yvonne Jones says Monday's testimony by former health minister John Ottenheimer proves the provincial government commitment to openness and accountability is nothing more than a sham.

Jones was responding to comments made by Ottenheimer that the reason he did not go public with information on the botched hormone receptor tests was that neither the opposition, nor the media, asked questions in the fall of 2005.

"Listening to former health minister John Ottenheimer try to pass the buck of his government's lack of openness and accountability is insulting to the public," Jones said. "Government accountability is not reserved to opposition or media questioning, it is supposed to be guided by a fundamental belief that the public has a right to know. It is obvious that Mr. Ottenheimer's lame attack on the opposition is his last resort to point fingers at everyone else except his own government.

"Both the Department of Health and Community Services and Eastern Health were fixated on keeping this issue hidden. Unfortunately, the general public did not know the magnitude of this problem and one newspaper article certainly did not raise alarm bells, especially when government did such a good job of downplaying the situation and hiding the information. Blaming the Opposition and media for not asking questions is certainly cowardly and a dereliction of ministerial duty."

In the meantime, Jones is encouraging government to allocate funding in this year's budget to update aging mammography equipment in the province.

According to the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, 12 analog mammography units in the province need to be replaced with full field digital machines within a period of three years at a total cost of \$8 million.