

# Opposition's diagnosis: Government is not listening

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 THE TELEGRAM

**B**oth opposition parties came down hard on the Williams administration Thursday after the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association (NLMA) revealed it was kept in the dark about a new pay package for pathologists and some oncologists.

"My first reaction is, can this government not do anything right?" asked NDP Leader Lorraine Michael.

"They just do not understand what real consultation is," Michael said the NLMA has a right to be upset after it expected meetings in May would have led to a joint solution to a shortage of the specialists.

"Right now, at this moment (government should) do something that may be impossible for them. Be humble and say... 'we haven't done the right thing here,'" said Michael.

She called the government's actions insulting to the NLMA.

"They've got to learn how to work together and to make sure that what they come up with is not something that (government is) coming up with on their own," said Michael who said the premier and his ministers just "don't know how to listen."

Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones was travelling out of cellphone range in Labrador Thursday and couldn't be reached for an interview. But in a news release she said the government might have made matters worse in the long run by going it alone.

"I have to question whether the approach used by the premier and Health minister are doing more overall harm to our system than good," said the release. "Ignoring the province's medical association will not improve the health care system and will not identify and address the problems that exist."

Jones also wrote that the government should have continued talking with the NLMA through the whole process of developing a new pay package for the pathologists and oncologists.

"When dealing with such serious issues, you cannot negotiate in a box and ignore the needs of the other 300 salaried specialists in the province. A reduction of staff in any one of these specialized fields would create a crisis in our health care system that would have a negative impact on patients," wrote Jones who said she fears a "much larger crisis ... looming just around the corner."