

NDP Caucus News

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NDP Urges Greater Support and Access for Mental Health

May 5 to 11 marks Mental Health Week, and NL NDP Leader Jim Dinn (St. John's Centre) is calling on the provincial government to make mental health and addictions services truly accessible.

Dinn points to data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), which shows Newfoundland and Labrador leads the country in the longest wait times for mental health counselling. In 2023–2024, the province recorded 3,178 referrals, with a median wait time of 51 days.

“When people seek help, support must be available—without delay,” said Dinn. “Too many people in this province live with mental illness and cannot access the services they need to begin healing. Expecting someone to wait 51 days, nearly two months, is unacceptable.”

Dinn also criticized the Liberal government for breaking its promise to fund mental health care. While the Liberals claim to allocate nine percent of Budget 2024 to mental health services, a Canadian Mental Health Association report shows the actual figure is closer to six percent. The national benchmark recommends 12 percent.

“It's appalling that the government has failed to meet even its own target,” said Dinn. “We must invest more in mental health care to ensure people get the support they need, when they need it. Nine percent is no longer enough.

“Between the pressures of the rising cost of living and the growing levels of hate and division online, we have plenty of reasons to take mental wellness seriously,” said Dinn. “Declaring a week for mental health means nothing unless it leads to change that helps people.

“A new hospital is great, but if it has less beds and not enough staff it means little,” said Dinn. “This government must prioritize the recruitment and retention of mental health care workers and ensure timely access to services. That's where the money needs to go.”

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