NDP Caucus News

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NDP Questions PCs' Commitment to Women and Gender Equality

Newfoundland and Labrador NDP MHA Sheilagh O'Leary (St. John's East–Quidi Vidi) is raising serious concerns about the Wakeham Conservatives' commitment to women and gender equality following the decision to assign the Women and Gender Equality portfolio to Minister Evans – who is already responsible for five departments, including Health and Community Services, the largest and most complex portfolio in the province.

O'Leary says that balancing six ministerial portfolios is an overwhelming workload. She argues that if women and gender issues were truly a priority, responsibility for them should be assigned to a minister with a lighter portfolio to ensure they receive the attention they deserve.

"We are in the middle of a healthcare crisis. The Minister has spoken publicly about the serious and urgent matters crossing her desk every day," said O'Leary. "With health, Labrador Affairs, and other portfolios already on her plate, where will the time come from to give women and gender issues the attention they deserve?"

O'Leary also pointed to the PCs' platform commitment to introduce new gender pay equity legislation, noting that meaningful consultation with unions and women's advocacy organizations will be critical.

"The last time legislation was introduced, there was a lack of proper consultation," she said. "This is complex, important work that requires focus and engagement. It's simply too much for any one person to carry if the goal is real, meaningful progress."

O'Leary further noted the global rise in misogyny and the increasing challenges faced by women and gender-diverse individuals.

"At a time when women and gender-diverse people are facing growing hostility and discrimination, this is not the moment to dilute attention," she said. "On the heels of International Women's Day, people in this province deserve confidence that gender equality will not be sidelined."

"This decision makes me question whether Premier Wakeham truly sees women and gender-diverse issues as a priority."

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