

NDP Caucus News

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NDP Makes Indigenous Healthcare and Mental Healthcare a Priority in Question Period

Healthcare was a priority for the NDP today in the House of Assembly, as Leader Jim Dinn (St. John's Centre) and MHA Sheilagh O'Leary (St. John's East-Quidi Vidi) asked the Conservatives questions around access to mental healthcare and Indigenous, culturally informed healthcare.

O'Leary began by highlighting a situation yesterday where an Inuk man was turned away from the St. Clare's Hospital emergency room under assumptions that he was under the influence. O'Leary points to the First Light Indigenous Health Clinic as a solution for culturally informed care for Indigenous folks in the metro area.

"Speaker, last night, an elderly Inuk man was refused care multiple times at the emergency room at St. Clare's. His first language is Inuktitut. Medical practitioners dismissed him as being drunk and had security eject him from the emergency room more than once. Only after First Light intervened with senior NLHS officials was the man able to obtain the immediate care that he deserved."

"So, I ask the Minister, will you acknowledge that culturally informed care is not a duplication of existing services, as the Minister has suggested in the past? And will we see funding for the First Light clinic in this upcoming budget, yes or no?"

Dinn followed by pressing government on the current wait times for those seeking to see a psychiatrist, following a call from a constituent whose daughter died by suicide while waiting for care. The NDP has long raised concerns about gaps in mental health access, efforts that led to the creation of the All-Party Committee on Mental Health. Dinn says it is clear that far more action is urgently needed.

"Speaker, timely access to mental health care is key to a person's recovery and well-being. A person called our office who has been waiting three years to see a psychiatrist since being referred," said Dinn. "Another person received a call that her daughter had an appointment to see a psychiatrist six years after being referred and five years since dying by suicide."

"Would the Minister of Health table in this House the number of people on the wait list to see a psychiatrist as well as the length of time on the waitlist?"

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For further information, contact Stephanie Curran, Media and Communications Officer, NDP Caucus at 330-0328 (o), or stephaniecurran@assembly.nl.ca

**NDP Caucus Office, Confederation Building, St. John's, NL A1B 4J6 · 709-729-0270 ·
ndpinfo@gov.nl.ca**