

Tilley should go: Liberals

*Eastern Health CEO
under fire over
handling of faulty tests*

BY TERRY ROBERTS

THE TELEGRAM

The Liberals say the provincial government did not go far enough Wednesday when it removed John Abbott as the deputy minister of health.

On Thursday, Liberal Leader Gerry Reid said Eastern Health CEO George Tilley and Health Minister Ross Wiseman should also be turfed for their handling of the faulty hormone receptor testing controversy.

The Liberals have previously suggested that Wiseman should go, but it was the first time Reid took aim at Tilley.

"Once you remove the deputy minister of health because he was too close to a particular file, than you've got to go all the way," Reid said outside the legislature.

Premier Danny Williams has expressed confidence in Wiseman, but was less forceful when questioned about Tilley.

See TILLEY, page A2

... Continued from page A1

"The employment of Mr. Tilley is governed and contracted by the Eastern Health authority and it's in their domain and their jurisdiction and we have no right to have any say in that one way or the other, so I have no particular personal opinion," Williams said.

As for whether the government has confidence in Tilley, Williams said that's a question for Eastern Health.

"They obviously have confidence in Mr. Tilley and are proceeding on with him and if that's the case, then we accept that."

In an interview with CBC News Thursday, Tilley said he will not step down.

Asked why he believes Tilley should be fired, Reid said it boils down to the fact that Eastern Health knew about the magnitude of the error rate with hormone receptor testing for many months, but failed to alert the public and many of the breast cancer patients who were directly impacted by the problem.

The testing is used to determine whether cancer patients are candidates for health-improving treatments such as Tamoxifen.

Court documents uncovered last month revealed the error rate for hormone receptor testing for the period from 1997 and 2005 was 42 per cent, or 317 of the 763 women who tested negative and were still alive.

In December, the health authority estimated the error rate at 10 per cent.

Some 100-plus patients required a change in treatment after the review was completed.

"That information should have been passed along to the affected individuals and the population in general back some two years ago," Reid said.

back some two years ago, Reid said.

Tilley has already apologized for withholding the information.

CIHRT Exhibit P-0225 Page 3

And Wiseman has previously stated that the decision was based on independent legal advice to Eastern Health, relating to the threat of litigation.

Earlier this week, a Newfoundland judge certified a class-action lawsuit against Eastern Health, and the provincial government has committed to holding a judicial review into the matter.

The government also announced Wednesday it appointed a top civil servant to handle "adverse" health issues, and quietly removed Abbott from his post.

Williams denies Abbott was fired, and insists he was offered a similar post in another department. But Abbott turned down the transfer and has now returned to the private sector.

Reid said if the premier were to follow the same logic in his decision to remove Abbott, Tilley should face a similar fate.

"If the premier, as he's saying, wants all of this to be open and transparent and he doesn't want anyone like Mr. Abbott, for example, being questioned about this because he was part of it, then obviously if you follow the line of reasoning and logic you have to take Mr. Tilley out, and you have to take Mr. Wiseman out," Reid said.

"You just can't say that Mr. Abbott, because he was the go-between between Eastern Health and the minister, you can't just remove him and say that everything is fine. You also have to deal with the other two problems. That's the CEO of Eastern Health and the minister of health himself."

Reid repeated an earlier assertion Abbott is being used as a scapegoat, and described recent moves by the government as "damage control."