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Health boards too big for public good, Reid says

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CBC News <<http://www.cbc.ca/news/credit.html>>

Many of the key problems in Newfoundland and Labrador's health care system are connected to a Tory decision to merge health authorities, Liberal Leader Gerry Reid says.

Reid said the Liberals, if elected on Oct. 9, would reverse a Progressive Conservative plan that cut the number of boards from 14 to four.

Liberal Leader Gerry Reid said authorities like Eastern Health have become too large to manage the health-care system effectively.  
(CBC)

He cited high-profile problems with Eastern Health, by far the largest of the boards, including inaccurate hormone receptor tests for hundreds of breast cancer patients, as well as a review of the work of a suspended radiologist that is still not sorted out.

"I think the reason we didn't hear about the hormone receptor testing is because the board is so large," Reid told supporters in Clarendville on Friday.

"A lot of people in that board doesn't know what's happening within it. I think with the radiology testing as well, if we have a local board in that area, that would have been discovered sooner."

The government called a judicial inquiry earlier this year to examine the hormone receptor issue.

Reid said while he thinks that 14 boards were too many, he said the new board structure has become too centralized.

The governing PCs announced a consolidation of the health boards in 2004. The new authorities brought together hospital, nursing home and community health boards.

Meanwhile, Reid said the Liberals are also prepared to give a pay raise to home-care workers.

"They've gone too long with too little," Reid said.

Reid would not provide cost estimates of the Liberal pledges for health care.

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