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To: Andrea Nolan; Brian Crawley; Carmel Turpin; Elizabeth Matthews; John Abbott; Moira Hennessey; Robert Thompson; Sandra Barnes; Stephen Dinn; Tansy Mundon
Subject: Fwd: Opposition calls for counseling and information line to diffuse breast cancer confusion

>>> Liberal Opposition 5/18/2007 12:41:03 PM >>>
 Opposition calls for counseling and information line to diffuse breast cancer confusion

Dwight Ball, MHA for the District of Humber Valley and Opposition Critic for Health and Community Services, says that given the controversy and confusion generated by the flawed breast cancer screening results, a toll-free counseling and information telephone line would be helpful and appropriate at this time.

Disclosures by the media on the number of cases that were retested for the faulty hormone receptor test between 1997 and 2005 by the Eastern Health Authority, as well as those requiring alternate treatments have created concern and confusion in the public with a series of questions being raised on the issue in the House of Assembly this week. In response to Ball's question on whether the Minister of Health and Community Services would consider setting up a telephone line to field questions and provide information, the minister indicated that several briefings on the affair would instead be provided by Eastern Health.

"While the briefings will be very valuable to help clarify the broader aspects of this matter, many people throughout the province will not be able to attend these sessions. Nor does this method respond to the need for individuals, particularly women who have been screened for breast cancer in the past decade, to pose more personal questions and seek information and direction," says Ball. "The important thing is to reach out to as many people as possible with this service.

"While government has indicated that it is undertaking a review of the matter to determine options, there has been no set time when any decisions will be made. In the meantime, women and their families are still naturally experiencing a great deal of anxiety and fear over these wrong tests results. They are on the phone calling their doctors, MHAs and support groups looking for information and just as importantly, seeking some degree of reassurance and comfort.

"I would encourage government, together with Eastern Health, to put this phone system in place as quickly as possible so that women and their families throughout Newfoundland and Labrador will have some place to call that can provide answers, information and even counseling. I would think this is part of the moral responsibility we all have to those affected in any way by what has transpired in our medical system at this time."

- 30 - Media Contact: Kim Ploughman Caucus

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