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PRESS RELEASE

No. 86/2012

Date: 6th February 2012

Opposition show lack of understanding of norovirus issues

The Opposition is showing a lack of understanding of the issues, and indeed of the way a modern Governmental team works, in its latest personalized attack on the Minister for Health.

It is precisely because of the way a virus infection works that it is perfectly possible to be releasing a statement in the morning describing the situation and for the situation to be totally different several hours later when the release reaches the public through the media. An infection is a biological process which develops and runs its course and which Health Minister, Dr John Cortes, an extremely well qualified biologist, understands better than most politicians and on which he requires little briefing.

All the necessary steps have been taken at the appropriate times by the professionals to contain the spread of the virus, which does not constitute a serious public health issue. Wards have been closed to visitors, but have not been closed to admissions, as was the case last year. This is the best way to protect the public by reducing contact with infected patients. The procedures, and the reasons for them have been explained to those concerned, and have in no way been kept secret. An announcement would have been made at the appropriate time when accurate information was collected. Releasing incomplete information too early is irresponsible and can cause unnecessary concern, which the Opposition would no doubt have criticised.

It seems that the Opposition feels that it should know everything before anybody else, as if it were still in Government.

The Opposition has also chosen to question the ability of a Minister of the Government to perform his duties. Dr Cortes is well known throughout his former professional life to have performed several roles at the same time and most successfully. He is extremely well qualified for the responsibilities that he now carries and is dedicating enormous amounts of time to these. Since coming into office less than two months ago, and even taking into account the Christmas period, he has held nearly 200 meetings with staff, patients and relatives in the Health Authority alone, as well as many more in the Environment Department and elsewhere, in addition to visiting wards and departments.

Moreover, it is absurd for the GSD Opposition to claim that combining the health portfolio with others can give an individual too much work when they themselves, in Government also combined health with Environment when Keith Azopardi was the Minister, and they then combined it with Education, Training and Culture when Bernard Linares was the Minister!

The Opposition, which as its leader made obvious in his recent intervention in Parliament does not understand the concepts of modern information technology, may not comprehend that, while he was dealing with the also important issue of the Upper Rock, he was in constant e-contact with the GHA, not only on the norovirus issue, but also others, including the critical collapse of the hospital bed situation which is totally due to the lack of vision and forward planning of the former GSD administration.