

Province rejects wastewater strategy

Too costly, minister says

By **EVERTON McLEAN**

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upon path forward for achieving regulatory clarity for owners of municipal wastewater facilities."

Newfoundland and Labrador was one of only three jurisdictions in Canada not to endorse a new strategy for the management of municipal wastewater effluent during a meeting of Environment ministers in Whitehorse Tuesday.

The strategy, that was developed by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) which met in the Yukon capital, sets out a harmonized framework to manage discharges from more than 3,500 wastewater facilities in Canada.

The council says many of the facilities are currently in need of repair and upgrading and, according to a CCME release, the plan "provides an agreed-

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treating waste water is a priority, Johnson said "we couldn't sign on to something knowing we couldn't complete it."

The province's contingent asked

Labrador, said she couldn't sign the document, simply because the cost of following the plan would be too high for residents.

She said the plan would require 660 sewage outfalls in this province to be upgraded to secondary sewage treatment facilities, a project she said would cost up to \$2.5 billion over 30 years.

While she said the province recognizes that treating waste water is a priority, Johnson said "we couldn't sign on to something knowing we couldn't complete it."

The province's contingent asked federal officials if there would be an additional pot of money to help pay for the infrastructure costs, but Johnson said she was told only money from the Building Canada Fund or money under the gas tax formula would be funneled to the sewage projects.

"Build Canada and gas tax isn't going to cut it," she said.

Johnson said Nunavut and Quebec also refrained, for similar reasons as this province.

Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador president Graham Letto said he was surprised the province didn't endorse the strategy, but he acknowledged "money is a big factor."

He understands the provincial government not signing on without extra federal funding, but he said he's concerned municipalities could be left to pay for the infrastructure requirements if the increased regulations are implemented federally.

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