

The federal government is forging ahead with new, tougher waste-water regulations, rules this province rejected in February, claiming they'd cost the province billions over the next 30 years. — Photo by Jupiter Images

# New sewage regulations could cost province \$2.5 billion over 30 years

By **EVERTON MCLEAN**  
THE TELEGRAM  
AND THE CANADIAN PRESS

The federal government is forging ahead with tough new regulations in its municipal waste-water treatment strategy — a strategy the Newfoundland and Labrador government rejected last February.

Federal Environment Minister Jim Prentice announced Thursday that Canadian municipalities will have to bring their sewage treatment plants up to snuff under new regulations to be unveiled by the Harper government later this year.

The new rules will set performance benchmarks, timelines and monitoring and reporting requirements for the country's 4,000 waste-water facilities.

Speaking in Saint John, N.B., Prentice said the regulations will cover all

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**Federal Environment Minister Jim Prentice**

waste-water systems operated by municipalities, the provincial and federal governments, and those on federal or aboriginal lands.

“All jurisdictions will now have to maintain, update or develop new regulatory tools to implement the Canada-wide strategy,” Prentice said, according to a copy of the speech provided by his office.

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**Newfoundland and Labrador Environment Minister Charlene Johnson**

“We have the strategy. We intend to enforce it with the powers of the Fisheries Act to protect the health of Canadians and the environment.”

Federal Environment Department officials contacted by The Telegram Thursday confirmed that the regulations will, indeed, apply to this province, despite the provincial government's objection in February.

That's when provincial Environment Minister Charlene Johnson refused to sign the strategy during a

meeting of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, stating that the requirements would be too costly for this province.

Johnson, who couldn't be reached Thursday, said at the time 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 realizes the importance of treating waste water, “we couldn't sign on to something knowing we couldn't complete it.”

In his announcement Thursday, Prentice said facilities that can't afford the upgrades or repairs can apply to Ottawa's infrastructure fund or borrow from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp.

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sakes, stop wasting taxpayers' money.”

NAPE estimates the laid-off workers are owed about \$5 million in lost wages and benefits. That works out to almost \$59,000 per person.

“If they're going to pay people, they should be paying them to work,” said Furlong. “That's twice that the award has been made in NAPE's favour — and the longer that this goes on, the higher the bill is going to be.”

She said the four-year legal dispute negates the estimated \$1.2 million the province saved from the layoffs.

NAPE is calling on the province to re-open the depots and return the highway workers to their year-round jobs. They carried out road maintenance and equipment repairs in the summer and provided snowclearing services in winter.

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## Homecare brings relief

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