

Garnish residents

put on boil-water order

Water problems indicative of small-town challenges, mayor says

By Paul Herridge

TRANSCONTINENTAL MEDIA—GARNISH

The Town of Garnish has a state-of-the-art water system. Unfortunately, it's useless.

Mayor Reuben Noseworthy said the town doesn't have the money to replace the rundown chlorination system needed to access the water supply and efforts over the past several years to lobby the provincial government for funding have been unsuccessful.

As a result, the community was placed on a permanent boil-water advisory Aug. 7.

"We were operating it in a manual state, but we're no longer able to even manually operate it."

Noseworthy said people in the community are less than thrilled.

"Residents of Garnish think that, with the amount of taxes they pay, they should have a water system that at least works, and I don't blame them."

The cost of a new chlorination system has been estimated at \$142,000, a considerable sum for a community the size of Garnish. The town has a

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small, residential tax base, and the mayor noted it is already paying more than a 40 per cent debt load on its water and sewer system.

An up-to-date list of boil-water advisories on the Department of Environment and Conservation's website shows 200 communities in the province — the majority of them small towns like Garnish.

A dozen of those communities are on the Burin Peninsula.

Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador president Graham Letto has spoken up before about what has

become a growing concern.

"At any given time, we have more than 200 boil orders in this province. It will take a real tragedy to expose our collective failure to deal with this problem," Letto said.

"National drinking water standards cannot be met by any municipality in this province, no matter the size of their population or bank account. Municipalities simply don't have the financial or human resources to meet them."

Noseworthy said the issue is symptomatic of the challenges facing small communities, as rural populations decline and infrastructure breaks down, fees increase or new systems are added to the mix.

"We just can't keep up with it anymore. The residents of Garnish are paying taxes now beyond what they should be paying. Waste management is one thing that's coming up. Waste management is going to burden the taxpayers even more.

"Here we are with all this water and now we have to boil it. It's so sad."

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