

Noteworthy

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Mobile training units for operators of water supply systems

Environment Minister Bob Mercer officially launched another government initiative to ensure the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have access to safe, clean drinking water. As part of the continuing education and training of operators of water supply systems in the province, the Department of Environment is providing on-site training to municipal operators with the assistance of three mobile operator training units. The units are based in Corner Brook, Grand Falls-Windsor and St. John's.

"The availability of qualified, trained operating personnel is vitally important to the safe and sustainable operation of municipal water supply systems," said Minister Mercer.

Minister Mercer said the Department of Environment has a long-term strategic plan for the education and training of water system operators, which involves a two-phase approach. The first phase of the program, which deals with classroom education and training, began in June 2001.

"The second phase of our education program is to provide on-site training to municipal operators regarding the proper operation and maintenance of their water supply systems," said Minister Mercer. "With the assistance of our mobile training units, we are bringing the training to the people in their own communities and with their own water systems. It allows the municipal operators to apply the knowledge gained through the classroom training to site-specific situations and equipment. The establishment of these units gives this province the distinction of being the first jurisdiction in Canada to offer this specialized, on-site training to municipal water supply operators."

With its investment of \$530,000, government has hired five new training staff and purchased three five-tonne cube vans. These vans are equipped with water system operator's equipment such as hydrants, leak detectors, chlorine measurement kits, pressure gauges, water level indicators, safety apparatuses, pipe locators, hypochlorinators and other equipment typically used in the day-to-day operation of a water system.

Minister Mercer said government has an action plan for drinking water which was outlined when Source to Tap was released in 2001. Significant progress has been made, including increased chemical and bacteriological sampling, increased investment in capital projects, a decrease in the number of boil water advisories, enhanced operator training and establishment of an annual public report on the safety of public water supplies.

"It is a high priority for government to ensure that the people of this province have access to safe, clean drinking water," said Minister Mercer. ❏

Premier says APC forward-thinking and successful

Upon conclusion of the Annual Premiers' Conference (APC) in Charlottetown, Premier Roger Grimes indicated that outcomes of the APC address Canadians' need for a stronger Canada and a more progressive and viable relationship with the federal government.

"Building on the success of discussions on a renewed federation where our province's Protocols of Conduct was a key element of the final plan developed by premiers, we moved forward on several key issues," said the Premier. "I am pleased to report that progress has been achieved on many files, including health care, insurance, and Canada-United States relations, among others."

On the health care front, premiers continue to be united in their efforts to ensure the federal government pays its fair share for health care in Canada.

"With my colleagues, I recognize that affordable and accessible insurance is important to consumers and businesses throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada. Following on the development of the insurance task force by Atlantic Premiers to look at insurance issues, premiers agreed as a first step to share information and strategies for a more coordinated effort to address rising claim costs and underwriting practices."

"This meeting was a success. I am committed to following through on the significant progress made in a more collaborative and constructive way." ❏

Container freight moving to Labrador north coast

Works, Services and Transportation Minister Jim Walsh and Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs Minister Wally Andersen recently announced that freight is now ready to be shipped to the north coast of Labrador.

Minister Walsh said his department has placed the vessel MV Saint Oran in service while details on the contracted vessel, MV Nada, are being finalized.

"We intend to get container freight moving from Cartwright to

the north coast right away," said the minister. "Anyone wishing to ship cargo to northern Labrador should immediately start sending their freight to Cartwright." Minister Walsh added that although details on freight rates have yet to be released, he asks shippers to keep their bills of lading.

"As a government, we felt it was imperative to get freight moving to the north coast of Labrador as quickly as possible," said Minister Andersen. "Hopefully this will provide some immediate relief until the Nada assumes its service." ❏

