

N.L. oil exploration spending under fire

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Opposition party politicians are criticizing the Newfoundland and Labrador government for spending \$20 million on oil exploration on the province's west coast.

On Aug. 7, Nalcor Energy, a company set up by the province to manage energy resources, announced it would be the primary operator in three exploration permits in the Parsons Pond area of the Great Northern Peninsula with a total investment of \$20 million.

In separate news releases, the provincial Liberals and the NDP accused the government of gambling away public money on risky business.

The Liberal party's release compared the exploration spending to a high-stakes poker game where the province is willing to ante up \$20 million for an opportunity to sit at the table.

"While there is a chance of doubling or tripling your money, there is an equal or greater chance that you could walk away with nothing," it said.

The release also quoted Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones.

"Our province has great challenges and I question whether gambling \$20 million of taxpayers money on oil exploration is the greatest financial priority in our province at this time," Jones said in the release.

In an NDP press release, provincial Leader Lorraine Michael said the company is being reckless.

"Nalcor Energy is using public money in a speculative way," said Michael. "There is no guarantee this investment will see any return. This expenditure means there is even less available money for much-needed programs like universal home care, a better drug program and child-care program."