

More oil spill scrutiny needed: N.L. Liberals

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Yvonne Jones is calling for more aerial surveillance of Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore oil industry. (CBC)

Newfoundland and Labrador's Liberal party wants the group that regulates the province's offshore petroleum industry to do more aerial surveillance for spills.

The Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board should have a plane in the air every day, looking for oil slicks and drilling mud spills, Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones told the house of assembly in St. John's on Thursday.

"Why is it that the only time these aircraft are flying to the rigs to look for oil spills is when the CNLOPB themselves request that that be done?" asked Jones.

Provincial Natural Resources Minister Kathy Dunderdale said daily CNLOPB flights aren't necessary.

The board can call in their own patrol aircraft when it believes it is necessary and satellite radar looks at the province's offshore area once or twice a week, Dunderdale said.

Furthermore, she said, the Canadian Coast Guard, the federal Fisheries Department and Transport Canada all have offshore surveillance programs that monitor for oil spills.

"Every day that there are good visibility and good flying conditions, there's a plane in the air going over our offshore, probably several," said Dunderdale.

All those flights don't generate daily reports for the CNLOPB but Dunderdale said members of those groups do let the board know if they see a spill.