

## Oil rigs need independent monitors: Liberals

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Yvonne Jones

The provincial Liberals continue to ask questions about how prepared the province is for an oil spill.

In the House of Assembly Thursday, Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones criticized Natural Resources Minister Kathy Dunderdale for comments made earlier this week.

Jones said the minister compared a 2004 oil spill at the Terra Nova offshore project to the current disaster unfolding in the Gulf of Mexico.

"The oil spill in 2004 was only 200 barrels versus the 70,000-per-day barrels that we're seeing currently taking place off the coast of Louisiana. It is like comparing an eye dropper, Mr. Speaker, to a fire hose," Jones said.

But Dunderdale accused Jones of twisting her words.

"I answered in terms of our own direct experience," replied the minister. "(The) oil spill that we had had in 2004, when wind and wave action had dispersed and helped vaporize the oil, and subsequent studies of the seafloor showed that there had been no settlement of oil on the seafloor, or no damage to the environment."

Jones then asked Dunderdale if the province would make it mandatory for independent monitors to watch for spills



Kathy Dunderdale

aboard rigs.

"Now that you are a developer, and an equity owner in the oil industry, why would you not support the concept of independent monitors on rigs, to remove any perception of conflict?" Jones asked.

Dunderdale said research shows having independent observers on rigs is not the best way to look for oil spills.

"The best way to do it, Mr. Speaker, is from the air. That is what's being done on a regular basis in our offshore," the minister replied.

Jones then asked why the government is "not prepared to put independent monitors and observers on these platforms, but yet support independent observers on fishing vessels."

Dunderdale said fishery observers inspect, count and measure fish as they come aboard a vessel.

"That's hard to do that from 20,000 feet," she quipped. "But Mr. Speaker, to spot an oil spill on our ocean, the most effective way to do that is from 20,000 feet or less," she said.

Dunderdale then suggested Jones and other opposition members attend a technical briefing on oil spill prevention and response, to be held on Monday by the CanadaNew found land and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board, to educate them-

selves.

"Mr. Speaker, we had a discussion earlier in question period about gambling, and I am ... willing to lay money that the Leader of the Opposition knows no more about what the regulation is in the United States with regard to drilling than the man in the moon," she said.

The minister said an independent review of offshore safety is currently underway.