

## Opposition urges interim financing for airport

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to become a viable business venture, given that the devastating loss of the Stephenville mill five years ago occurred under its watch," he said.

Dean said it's noteworthy that in a recent oil and gas study identifying "Opportunities in the Western Region" released by the Department of Natural Resources, one of the recommendations was to maintain and upgrade infrastructure specific to the needs of potential hydrocarbon projects, including wharves and air facilities at Corner Brook and Stephenville .

"Further, if the often-touted "rural lens" that ensures all government decisions consider rural views and perspectives is truly an effective tool, it would ultimately guarantee that interim financing for the Stephenville Airport would be a given for this rural region." Tony Cornect, legislature member for Port au Port District, said government has been approached by the Stephenville Airport Corporation for interim financing while they are negotiating with a third party.

He said he and Joan Burke, legislature member for St. George's-Stephenville East, have been involved with this file for some time and have been speaking with the Stephenville Airport Corporation and the Town of Stephenville on it.

They've also been speaking with Shawn Skinner, minister of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development, in regards to this proposal and have asked him to look favourably to this request.

He said government is reviewing the request and they are expecting a reply shortly.

"The province has been supportive of the Stephenville airport in the past and I'm confident the working relationship will continue in the future," Cornect said.

Burke said she and Cornect have always worked well with the town and airport corporation on issues dealing with the airport and they've brought the issues forward and are awaiting an answer.

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STEPHENVILLE Opposition Municipal Affairs critic Marshall Dean is calling on the provincial government to provide interim financing to the Stephenville Airport Corporation.

The MHA for Straits-White Bay North said the interim financing is needed until a recently submitted airport business plan is evaluated and a long-term financing decision is reached.

The Stephenville Airport Corporation has been lobbying the provincial and federal governments for money to expand its fuel storage capacity to accommodate larger airlines and upgrade aging infrastructure. The airport is designated as an alternate fueling stop to Gander for international flights en route to Europe.

"This international airport is an important piece of infrastructure to Stephenville and region and deserves to be given a fighting chance to survive," Dean said. "This is a facility already in place and operating and now requires a small investment to stabilize its operations in the short-term until the bigger picture of financing is addressed."

Dean said the Stephenville town council provided up to a \$400,000 investment last year to keep the airport running through the winter months and assist with the business plan.

"The Williams government owes it to the town and region to assist the airport