

Jones slams MMSB

*Calls province's record
on waste reduction shameful*

By DAVE BARTLETT

THE TELEGRAM

In many backyards around the province, a cylindrical black plastic composter — or two — sits quietly doing its part for the environment.

It breaks down organic kitchen waste, such as vegetable peels, tea bags and eggshells, turning it into rich soil for things like flower beds.

People in this province used to be able to buy the composters at cost through the Multi-Materials Stewardship Board (MMSB), but not anymore, says Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones.

"I just found out over the weekend they've discontinued the program," she said, adding that she doesn't understand why the MMSB, a provincial agency, would eliminate a program that didn't cost it any money.

Jones contends it's a sign of how poor the Williams government's record is on waste reduction.

"I think that the MMSB should actually hang their head in shame because they have done very little in terms of reducing waste in this province," she says.

The pilot program to sell composters was a success, with 20,000 sold, says MMSB spokeswoman Cara Pike.

She acknowledged that while the composting education campaign will continue, the MMSB is no longer selling the bins.

"Retailers within the province now are selling compost bins, so they are becoming more readily available," she says.

"We still offer our free build-your-own bin plan, (which is) downloadable from our website."

"Advertising is good," Jones said. "Bringing the issues to the attention of people is good. But if they don't have an avenue in which to participate in waste management, that becomes a problem."

She says no new ideas have come from the MMSB in years.

"The recycling of bottles and cans started back when we were in government and I think that has been an overwhelming success," says Jones, adding not enough has been done to reduce the use of plastic shopping bags or to recycle tires or electronic waste, such as computers.

"We still have a situation where millions of tires are being stored out in Placentia area," Jones says, calling the lack of a plan to recycle tires a "failure in its finest form."

The former Liberal government started charging a fee for new tires sold in this province to pay for their recycling a year and a half before Danny Williams formed his government.

In the five years since, several attempts to set up a tire-recycling plant in the province failed.

Jones says a number of municipal leaders have told her the province's waste-management strategy is flawed.

"It's long, it's cumbersome, it's unrealistic and it's not going to work in most areas of the province," she says.

Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador president Graham Letto said reducing the waste going to landfills is critical, but it's a challenge for many towns.

He says while recycling and waste management is important, many communities continue to struggle to offer basic services, like water and sewer, garbage collection and snow clearing.

He says the days of just burning or burying garbage have to end, but it won't happen overnight.

"It's changing because we have to change," says Letto. "The whole world is changing and people are demanding it change."