

# Province puts new cap on water extraction

Municipalities limited to 35 per cent of surface level water in driest conditions

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MLA James Aylward, left, and Tory Leader Steven Myers lead a parade of Conservatives into the afternoon sitting of the legislature on a sunny but windy Tuesday in Charlottetown.

The provincial government has brought in new rules that will see a cap placed on the amount of water that can be extracted by from P. E. I. waterways. Environment Minister Janice Sherry said Tuesday municipalities will not be able take more than 35 per cent of surface level water from any given stream when conditions are at their driest.

Sherry said this is being done to protect waterways and aquatic life.

"We've done work with the Canadian Rivers Institute that says, based on science, you need to limit the amount of use during the lowest points of the stream flow to 35 per cent so that you do not impact aquatic life," Sherry said. "From here on in, you won't be able to exceed using 35 per cent of the stream flow in any given waterway across the province."

The issue was raised in question period Tuesday when Tracadie-Hillsboro Park MLA Buck Watts asked Sherry if there is enough water to supply the city of Charlottetown in light of concerns raised over low water levels in the Winter River last summer.

Sherry said she acknowledges there were a number of issues that contributed to these low levels, including the hot, dry weather and low replenish rate from the spring before.

She said she also recognizes meeting the 35 per cent target at low-level periods will be a challenge.

That's why she is giving municipalities a grace period, during which this target will not be strictly enforced.

"I think that right now, because this is new, we have to be a little bit respectful and mindful that it is a change and we want people to buy in and start to be mindful of these things."

Sherry also said her staff has met with City of Charlottetown officials over the issue of the Winter River watershed.

She said the new well that will be developed in Miltonvale would help alleviate much of the strain.

But she raised a note of concern over the fact the city has only budgeted \$ 2.6 million in this year's budget on this project in Coles Creek.

"I did notice the cost for the new well in Coles Creek is \$ 10 to \$ 15 million," she said.

"That is a project that will need to be completed by 2015."

The Guardian contacted a member of the city's water and sewer utility committee, who expressed surprise at this 2015 deadline.

Edward Rice, who chairs the committee, said he will be reviewing Sherry's remarks and seeing how this compares to the city's plan for the Coles Creek well.

In the City of Charlottetown's 2013 budget last week, \$ 2.6 million was earmarked for engineering work to be done on the new water source.