

# Major water improvements on tap, Williams promises

Newfoundland and Labrador's premier says his government will likely spend heavily in the new year to improve the quality of the province's drinking water.

Danny Williams said he intends to do something meaningful about the discoloured and often foul-smelling water he has seen in plenty of communities, mostly in rural areas.



*'I was horrified at the drinking water,' Danny Williams says of his reaction to what many rural communities must endure.*  
(CBC)

"I remember when I first got into politics, I was horrified at the drinking water in this province, in many communities, that was contaminated," Williams told CBC News.

Now armed with a record-setting surplus — the province reported earlier this month it is expecting to finish the fiscal year with \$881 million in the bank — Williams said the province can start fixing longstanding water quality issues.

Boil orders are in effect in dozens of communities, and have been for years. Even where boil orders are not needed, water often has problems with taste, smell and appearance.

"I was in Gaultois just prior to the election," said Williams, referring to an isolated community on Newfoundland's south coast, "and couldn't get over the state of the drinking water down there.

"So getting out during byelections and elections and seeing it first-hand really gets you a real feel for what people have been forced to live with in the province, and they shouldn't have to."

Many communities also have problems with trihalomethanes, or THMs, which form in chlorinated water supplies and have been linked to liver cancer.

In 2005, Auditor General John Noseworthy warned that the provincial government was falling behind on testing for THMs. As well, Noseworthy found that tests in 2003 found that 97 different water supplies had THM levels above the maximum acceptable level.

The government has not yet developed a plan on tackling water quality. In fact, Williams said he has not even consulted his cabinet on it.

However, he described the issue as a personal priority for the coming year, which likely means it will become a government mission for 2008.