



"Quebec avails of many programs whereby they get assistance to promote their industries and create employment, and I welcome that," Williams said. "But leave us alone."

Meanwhile, Nova Scotia Energy Minister Bill Estabrooks also weighed in, saying Charest appeared to be opposing what he called "a good shared partnership" between two other provinces.

"In my opinion, the premier of Quebec should mind his own business," Estabrooks said in an interview Thursday.

"He's dismissing a very valid idea which comes from two provinces that have worked very carefully in terms of giving a reliable energy service to our provinces."

Estabrooks noted that Newfoundland and Labrador has had an often rocky history with Quebec because of the 65-year contract with the Upper Churchill hydroelectric project, in which Hydro-Quebec has been able to resell energy generated in Labrador to U.S. markets at a significant profit.

"There's a lot of politics involved in this," Estabrooks said. "Let the federal government judge this proposal, which we've put in with Newfoundland and Labrador, on its merits. Let's keep the politics out of it."

Williams said he expects that the federal government will make a decision that does not bow to another province's wishes.

"The Quebec government has always had a sphere of influence. I think that's waning," he said.

"I think Canadians are finally wising up to the fact that Quebec can't blackmail Canada because it has a certain number of seats. ... Quebec has a legitimate place in Canada ... but when we have a situation when one province is deliberately trying to thwart at least two other provinces, and indirectly affect four other provinces, that's sad."