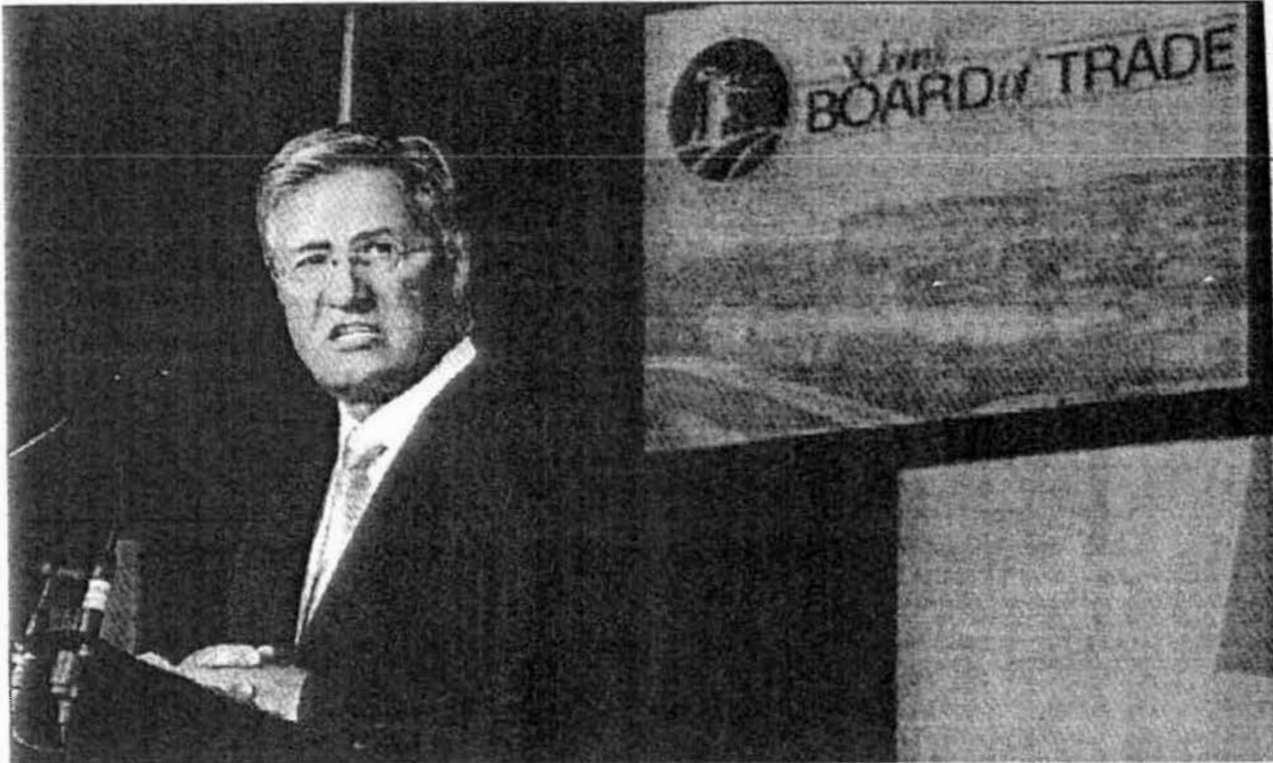


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# Williams talks tough



Premier Danny Williams addressed the St. John's Board of Trade at its annual "Premier's Luncheon" at the St. John's Convention Centre Wednesday. Williams took a strip off the back of Quebec, ripping the province over its actions on the Lower Churchill hydroelectric project. Williams said Quebec's objections to developing the hydro resource are abhorrent and shameful, among other things.

By STEVE BARTLETT

THE TELEGRAM

If Danny Williams' language was any stronger, the audience might have been asked to excuse his French.

The premier wouldn't want them to excuse Quebec, though.

In a speech to a St. John's Board of Trade luncheon Wednesday, he called Quebec's approach to the

Lower Churchill hydro development obstructionist, abhorrent and intolerable.

"When it comes to Hydro-Quebec, we're taking no prisoners, believe me," he said.

The Lower Churchill is a megawatt megaproject that's a "major priority" for Newfoundland and Labrador.

While Williams said his province is proceeding wisely, he blasted

Quebec for blocking the transmission of 3,000 megawatts from the Labrador river.

It wasn't his first offensive against that province for its position, but it was arguably his strongest.

The premier pointed to Quebec's letter protesting an application for federal funds to run a transmission line across the Cabot Strait to Nova Scotia.

He said the correspondence, signed by Quebec Premier Jean Charest, argued such funding would amount to an unfair subsidy and place Hydro-Quebec at a disadvantage.

Williams called that "unabashed hypocrisy."

Quebec, he noted, made \$2.3 billion off Upper Churchill power in 2008 and has seen its share of the federal equalization program soar to 60 per cent in recent years.

*(Quebec) wants it all, and that just doesn't go down well with me, premier says*

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# 'I'm starting to get really pissed off here': Williams

That's only the tip of the iceberg of the money Quebec receives from Canada, he said.

"Somebody contact my heart doctor. I'm starting to get really pissed off here," said Williams, who underwent cardiac surgery earlier this year.

Quoting a Montreal Gazette editorial that called the attempts to scuttle the Lower Churchill project "unseemly, unwise and even shameful," the premier continued his attack by saying Canadians are realizing Quebec's obstructionist approach.

"The rest of the country, and even Quebec itself, is finally admitting that it has been getting away with highway robbery in Canada for decades."

Quebec's actions, he continued, are "abhorrent" and "intolerable" in a country where provinces are equals.

He said Quebec's approach is further proof of its anti-Canada attitude, adding he thought it was the Bloc Quebecois who believed in elevating that province's status and undermining the federation.

Quebec's actions are damaging its reputation as well as the rest of the country's, he said.

Williams also pointed out Quebec boasts that it's a leader in free trade and green energy. If it is, and if it wants to co-operate in the federation, he said, "then it needs to get out of the way of the progress of its neighbours."

The premier touted the Lower Churchill as the best green energy project in North America.

He said it would help Canada meet green targets and be a major boost to Newfoundland and Labrador, with almost 30 million person-years of employment during construction and numerous opportunities for business.

"There simply is no down side in this incredible development."

Reporters later asked Williams if this was the beginning of a political war with Charest.

"Take no prisoners is probably as strong a statement as I can make," the premier replied.

He said he doesn't think there is anything wrong with him pointing out Charest's attempts to undermine the project, especially when Quebec media are acknowledging it.

Williams said he has difficulty accepting that Quebec "shafted us once" on the Upper Churchill and appears to be trying to do it again.

"Why don't they just step aside and say, 'OK fine, we've done that, but now you get on with your Lower Churchill. We will help you. We will accommodate you."

"We will still charge for transmission ... but we will facilitate that second project.' But no, they want it all, and that just doesn't go down well with me."

Williams said the application to fund the Cabot Strait-Nova Scotia transmission line is ongoing, with senior officials continuing to meet.

He said he hasn't recently spoken to Charest or Prime Minister Stephen Harper on the issue.

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