



Danny Williams 'unequivocally positive' about Muskrat Falls

Hydro project 'will reap benefits for many generations,' Danny Williams tells Halifax business crowd

Paul Palmeter · CBC News ·

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Former Newfoundland Premier Danny Williams spoke Thursday evening at the Halifax Chamber of Commerce. (Paul Palmeter/CBC)

Former Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Danny Williams is calling for Atlantic Canada to get a move on with the Muskrat Falls energy project.

"I remain unequivocally positive about the Muskrat Falls project and the benefits for both of our regions," Williams said during a speech in Halifax Thursday evening.

"It's a project that, when completed, will reap benefits for many generations to come — and unlike oil, water flows forever."

One of his last deals as premier was the mega hydro power deal to develop the Lower Churchill Project.

Fast forward to 2016, and the status of the project is in limbo.

Last week, new Nalcor CEO Stan Marshall said he was [unsure if it would be worth completing the project](#).

- [Nova Scotia Premier confident in Muskrat Falls hydro project despite Nalcor CEO's concerns](#)

'Change our path'

Williams, now away from politics for more than five years, was the keynote speaker at Halifax Chamber of Commerce's annual spring dinner.

Williams spoke at length about what motivated him to enter government.

"After years of watching in frustration as opportunities for growth were missed, lost or mismanaged, I had enough," Williams said.

"From the fishery to the Upper Churchill, I was determined to change our path in the history books."

- [Nalcor CEO 'deeply troubled' by Muskrat Falls delays and cost overruns](#)

'Difficult and hard choices'

The recent budget tabled in St. John's painted a [grim picture of the province's finances](#). It was laced with cuts, fees and taxes.

The situation is so bad, [half of the provinces libraries are now being closed](#).

"Our most recent budget was probably one of the most toughest budgets you can imagine," Williams said.

"I appreciate that the government had to make some very difficult and hard choices."

- [Protests planned following 'province-wide discontent' with budget](#)

But he ended his speech on a positive note.

He said the economy is, and always will be, cyclical and while it's currently in a valley, it will return to the top of the mountain in due time.

Career full of controversy

The former businessman and lawyer stormed into power when he led his Progressive Conservatives to a majority government in 2003, holding power until 2010.

He's made the news many times for [good humour](#) and [terse commentary](#).

And just last fall, CBC Newfoundland revealed his [blind trust acquired land from the provincial housing corporation](#) during his tenure as premier.

'Arsehole from Newfoundland'

In a spat with Prime Minister Paul Martin over the Atlantic Accord, Williams ordered Canadian flags removed from provincial buildings.

His dislike for federal leaders hit a high note in his dealings with Prime Minister Stephen Harper when Williams rolled out his ABC campaign (Anything But Conservative).

"During our battles with the federal government with Paul Martin and Stephen Harper, I reputedly had a not-so-flattering nickname in the Prime Minister's Office," Williams said.

"I was the asshole from Newfoundland, but if they really understood our Atlantic Canadian culture and identity, I would have been the arsehole from Newfoundland."

To the crowd, he was all about looking forward. He encouraged leaders in the room to work with the federal Liberal government to create a strategic plan for the Atlantic region.

Arrest at Garth Brooks

The trip to Halifax was a return to the city where he received his law degree at Dalhousie University.

"My first arrest actually came in Halifax — my only arrest, I might add," Williams said jokingly.

"I was detained when halfway through a Garth Brooks concert. I tried to bring some beer back into the concert when the auditorium doors were already closed."

Williams spread his message of innovation and positivity by leaving the crowd in stitches:



Barbara B. Pike

@BarbaraB_Pike

"Never let the haters get you down," sound advice from Danny Williams @halifaxchamber #HCCDanny

8:53 PM - Apr 28, 2016

3 See Barbara B. Pike's other Tweets



Jess Meldrum

@jessmeldrum

"The only time I have ever been arrested was in Halifax at a Garth Brooks concert" Danny Williams. Best. Speaker. Ever.

8:41 PM - Apr 28, 2016

1 See Jess Meldrum's other Tweets

He even weighed in on Republican candidate Donald Trump:



Margaret Chapman

@MargaretChapman

"I have a better tan and better hair than Trump." Danny Williams #hccddanny

8:42 PM - Apr 28, 2016 · Halifax, Nova Scotia

11 See Margaret Chapman's other Tweets



Maria McGowan

@mariamcgowan

"For the record, Donald Trump is a liar!" Danny Williams

Despite the giggles, he left the crowd with pearls of wisdom:



Ann Divine

@oanndivine

"Stay positive and outwit our opponent." Danny Williams former premier, NFL.

8:52 PM - Apr 28, 2016

[See Ann Divine's other Tweets](#)

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