

'We want respect'

Electricity, oil on tap for Williams at conference

BY JAMIE BAKER
The Telegram

Hot on the heels of announcing the province's go-it-alone plans for the Lower Churchill, Premier Danny Williams is in Newport, R.I., this week meeting with potential power customers on the energy-starved eastern seaboard of the United States.

Williams is joining the premiers of Nova Scotia, P.E.I., New Brunswick and Quebec, along with the governors of Rhode Island, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut at the New England Governors-Eastern Canadian Premiers Conference.

Given that many of those states are anxious to develop energy options — and the fact that Quebec Premier Jean Charest is expected to be in atten-

dance — Williams said it will be a perfect opportunity to promote Lower Churchill development potential.

Over the course of the next decade, there is going to be an energy shortage in this part of the country, so when I'm here, not only do I talk about electricity, I also talk about oil, potential for natural gas development, and so on," Williams said.

Along with Lower Churchill electricity, oil will also likely loom large on Williams' agenda.

The province took some criticism during the recent Houston oil conference — an event that was not attended



Danny Williams

by Williams or Natural Resources Minister Ed Byrne — for the province's stand on the Hebron-Ben Nevis project.

Williams doesn't believe that stand has hurt the province's standing as an emerging energy player, and said he will carry a strong "open for business" message to the conference.

"All we are telling industry — whether it's the oil industry, the mining industry, or the hydroelectric industry — is that we want respect," Williams said. "We are tough negotiators, we are going to seek firm deals, we will seek the maximum benefit for our province and our people.

"We have stated our position very clearly and people who are in business respect that."

Williams said the Hebron project partners want to see the development happen and he is confident a deal will

eventually get done

"Petro-Canada has indicated they want to get on with this project, Exxon-Mobil have come back and indicated they don't want to sell their interests because they believe this is a project that is going to move forward and I know Chevron and Norsk Hydro certainly want to get on with the project," he said.

'Will happen'

"The Hebron project will happen. We are dealing with an industry in a very healthy and profitable state. We are saying we expect to get more this time around and I think they understand that."

While energy issues will be on the table in a big way, Williams also expects a lot of attention to be paid to oceans technology and management — a field in which the province is con-

sidered a leader.

In fact, the premier will lead a 10-company delegation from the province for a trade mission being held along with the annual conference.

"We have world-class expertise in marine technology in Newfoundland and Labrador," Williams said, indicating the province had developed a particularly close relationship on oceans technology with Rhode Island, this year's host state. "They will meet with companies from Rhode Island and other provinces and states ... in St. John's last year we built a very good, working relationship with the governor of Rhode Island.

"As a result, it has enhanced our contacts and opportunities in Rhode Island — this is economy building, it's building business relationships."

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