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Summary:

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Sunday, September 04, 2011 06:04PM Item # 06  
NTV Television

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**JODI COOKE: A leading environmental group is weighing in on the recent report that called the analysis of the Lower Churchill hydroelectric project inadequate. The Sierra Club says with these findings, more research needs to be done and other energy options need to be considered. Here now is NTV's Dave Squires with this story.**

**DAVE SQUIRES: Last week a joint panel review of the Lower Churchill project found that Nalcor had not justified plans to tap power at Muskrat Falls from the Churchill River as well as a separate plan for the larger Gull Island site. The review panel is recommending a new independent analysis based on economic energy and environmental considerations. Fred Winsor of the Sierra Club says they agree with those recommendations.**

**FRED WINSOR: We're glad to see that the report acknowledged much of the information that's available on the negative impacts of hydroelectric power. And it also recognized that there hadn't been enough work done on the various kinds of renewable energy sources in the province.**

**DAVE SQUIRES: The Sierra Club's number one priority is to reduce greenhouse gases in the province and would rather see an assessment of all energy sources. The club says hydroelectric energy is not the answer because they have seen the environmental devastation these kinds of projects can cause.**

**FRED WINSOR: The destruction of quite considerable amounts of natural habitats, when you put these projects in. They try to call them green projects but they're not really green and there's all kinds of, between mercury in the water, contaminating fish to methane coming off the surface from the decomposing organic material that's flooded.**

**DAVE SQUIRES:** The provincial government did respond to the report, saying it won't stop their progress on the project. Mr. Winsor says that is not a good idea.

**FRED WINSOR:** Two wrongs don't make a right and we can't, there's nothing they can really do to change that kind of habitat destruction that would happen if you put a hydroelectric project there, the kind of one they're proposing. So again we're back to what the panel said, which is to investigate existing renewable energy prospects in Newfoundland, and we have the best single wind energy source in all of North America and why are we wasting this?

**DAVE SQUIRES:** Dave Squires, NTV News.

**LARRY JAY:** And still with Muskrat Falls, an economist says the project is still the best option for our province despite the environmental report. Wade Locke argues that Nalcor needs to do more to explain the project to the public. To explain that, here's NTV's Michael Connors.

**MICHAEL CONNORS:** The environmental review has given lots of ammunition to opponents of the Muskrat Falls project. The report concluded that Nalcor's economic analysis of the project wasn't adequate. MUN Economics Professor Wade Locke works with Nalcor on assessing employment benefits from the project. He stands by the economic analysis that Muskrat Falls is the lowest cost option for providing power.

**WADE LOCKE:** My view is that the Muskrat Falls is the best economic option for meeting the needs, the energy needs of the province.

**MICHAEL CONNORS:** The report called on Nalcor to investigate alternative sources of energy, such as natural gas, but Locke says there is no viable natural gas industry in the province right now.

**WADE LOCKE:** We don't have a natural gas development right now and you know bringing natural gas ashore, if it were ashore and we got a market for it, then that might be a cheap alternative to Muskrat or to other alternatives. However, we don't have a natural gas development and the amount of gas that would be brought ashore to make it efficient, you're still going to have to export somewhere. You got the same problem in terms of doing that, and right now there are no developments for natural gas.

**MICHAEL CONNORS:** But Locke does not take issue with the environmental panel itself. He says that the panel needs more information and Nalcor and the government will have to do a better job of explaining the project.

**WADE LOCKE:** The panel is a credible group and obviously if a credible with no obvious agenda comes to the conclusion they came to, we need to explain this better and in fact I'm trying to commit to some degree to that process right now.

**MICHAEL CONNORS:** Michael Connors, NTV News.