

Article rank 28 Dec 2010 The Telegram (St. John's) BY DAVE BARTLETT dbartlett@thetelegram.com
THE TELEGRAM

Questions welcome on Muskrat Falls: minister

Skinner believes former Liberal MHAs playing politics

Any time I feel uncomfortable answering a question, or any time I feel uncomfortable defending the position of government, we're probably in a weak position. I don't feel uncomfortable (about Muskrat falls). I don't feel like I can't answer any questions.

Natural Resources Minister Shawn Skinner says he welcomes questions about the Muskrat Falls project.

The Liberal Opposition spent most of the fall session in the House of Assembly asking about, and criticizing, the first phase of the Lower Churchill deal signed in November.

But two other vocal critics — both former Liberal politicians — have also publicly slammed the deal. "I'm glad the questions are being asked, and I don't care what the source of the question is, whether it's (former premier Roger) Grimes, (former Liberal cabinet minister Danny) Dumaresque or anyone else," Skinner told The Telegram.

He welcomes the scrutiny and said it's good to challenge the government on issues like this, as the province also wants to be sure the deal is the best one possible.

Defending actions

As minister, Skinner said he should be able to stand up and answer questions and defend what the government does.

"Any time I feel uncomfortable answering a question, or any time I feel uncomfortable defending the position of government, we're probably in a weak position," he said. "I don't feel uncomfortable (about Muskrat falls). I don't feel like I can't answer any questions."

Skinner said the Opposition, and the former Liberal politicians, are just doing their job.

"But when you get beyond them, I don't hear a lot of other (criticism) out there," he said.

The Liberals accused the government a number of times in the House of giving Emera Energy — the Nova Scotia company that is partnering with Nalcor to develop the project — too sweet a deal at the expense of the people of the province.

Partners benefit

Skinner disagrees.

He said the Upper Churchill agreement showed this province how bad a one-sided deal can be. That's why the government wanted a fair deal for its partners.

But Skinner said just because Emera is getting a good deal doesn't make it a bad deal for the province.

And he said a good deal with Emera also opens the door to cooperate with the company on other projects.

Printed and distributed by NewspaperDirect | www.newspaperdirect.com, US/Can: 1.877.980.4040, Intern: 800.6364.6364 | Copyright and protected by applicable law.