

Article rank 1 Mar 2011 The Telegram (St. John's) BY JAMES MCLEOD jmcleod@thetelegram.com
THE TELEGRAM

Muskrat Falls bolsters energy security: minister

Connection to North American grid would give power in a catastrophe

The province will be on the hook for the vast majority of cost overruns for the Muskrat Falls hydroelectric project, says former MHA Danny Dumaresque. Dumaresque said Nalcor's track record isn't great on this sort of thing. Natural

Resources Minister Shawn Skinner says that an extra benefit to the Muskrat Falls deal is energy security for the province.

By building a subsea cable to Nova Scotia, the province would be hooked into the North American energy grid.

"We're anticipating to mostly use it to export excess capacity, excess electricity into the Atlantic provinces and the northeast United States, but in the event of a catastrophe ... it would be possible for us to import electricity," Skinner said in a recent interview.

"It's the first time we've ever had that link. Right now, we're isolated. If something happened now, we're stuck. We're sort of at risk."

If the project is completed, the province will be reliant on the Labrador hydroelectric dam for a significant portion of its power.

But if a storm or other disaster knocked the generating station out of commission, or broke the transmission lines under the Strait of Belle Isle or across the island, this province could buy energy from the Maritimes and beyond.

Skinner said once the project comes to fruition, the province would join the North American reliability grid group, a body which maps out the whole energy infrastructure and make estimates for what happens if one portion or another goes down.

Multiple benefits

Skinner said the major reason for developing Muskrat Falls is economic, but there are secondary benefits.

The energy security is one of those, along with the thousands of jobs which it is projected to create.



"There are tens and hundreds of thousands of person hours of employment here," Skinner said. "This will be a major economic driver that will have all kinds of spin off, particularly in Labrador."

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