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Muskrat is about just two questions: Dunderdale

When



— Transcontinental Media file photo

Muskrat falls.

it comes to Muskrat Falls, Premier Kathy Dunderdale says people should only think about two simple questions.

"First of all, do we need the power?" she asked Friday.

"And the second question we've got to ask is: what's the cheapest way?"

Dunderdale was echoing Natural Resources Minister Jerome Kennedy, who said Thursday that the whole hydroelectric project boils down to the same two questions.

The government vehemently insists that yes, the province needs the power, and that independent assessments will prove that the Churchill River hydroelectric dam is the cheapest way to generate it.

"We can't buy it from Quebec any cheaper, we can't build it any cheaper, we can't bring it in from Nova Scotia any cheaper.

"That is the cheapest we can get it in Newfoundland and Labrador," she said.

Members of the Liberal Party — the project's loudest opponents — have disputed the answers to both of those questions. Critics have also raised any number of specific technical objections with the project and how the development deal is structured.

Most recently, project partner Emera said that energy prices in the 14-16 cent per kilowatt/hour range was too high, and they would never go forward with the project at those rates. The cost of power to Nova Scotia is expected to be much lower.

Dunderdale said the cost of Muskrat Falls power will mean that Newfoundlanders will be paying 14.3 cents for electricity when the project comes online.

"We're not going to get 10 cent power, but Nova Scotia may be able to get 20-cent power, or 11 cent power," she said. "They have transmission already in place. They have other things they can draw on that we don't have here in the province. So you're not comparing apples to apples."

Dunderdale also downplayed the significance of a delay on the project. A deal between Nalcor and Emera was supposed to be done by the end of November, but it has been pushed back until the end of January.

"It's more important to get the agreement right than to get them done on artificial timelines," Dunderdale said.

"That's our primary motivation, to get it right, every piece of this project."

jmcleod@

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