



## Protesters occupying Muskrat Falls camp exit, despite some skepticism



Nalcor CEO Stan Marshall responds to new agreement

Ryan Cooke and Daniel MacEachern · CBC News ·

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It was an emotional scene outside the gates of the Muskrat Falls work camp after protesters who had occupied the site exited on Wednesday afternoon. (Katie Breen/CBC)

Protesters who have been occupying the Muskrat Falls site have left after Indigenous leaders suggested they do so following a marathon meeting with Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Dwight Ball.

Demonstrator Roy Blake told CBC News that police have said there will be no arrests.



**Katie Breen**

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Protesters who had been camped out inside [#MuskratFalls](#) exit to group of supporters. No arrests made despite two court injunctions

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It's believed that all protesters have now left the work camp.

- [\*\*Provincial government, Labrador leaders make 'significant' Muskrat Falls progress\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Muskrat Falls unrest simmered for years: a look back at methylmercury concerns\*\*](#)

Innu elder David Nuke was one of about 45 protesters still on site Wednesday morning who decided to leave at 1 p.m.

"We're looking forward to more meaningful information from a scientific level that will allow us to proceed and continue our efforts to have our demands fulfilled [that hunger striker] Billy [Gauthier] outlined," he said.

Protesters who have occupied the Muskrat Falls site have left despite some skepticism about the deal reached with the NL government. 1:51

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After walking through the gates, Nuke took time to thank his fellow protesters for their efforts.

"Let's not forget it's not the three aboriginal leaders that accomplished this for Labrador, it's the people that were struggling inside these gates that accomplished what is being celebrated today," he said.

"Without these people outside the gate and inside the gate, we wouldn't be where we are today"



Stan Marshall said Nalcor is still calculating the cost of the agreement made by Premier Dwight Ball with Indigenous leaders. (Terry Roberts/CBC)

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Nuke said it's up to each person to decide if they want to continue protesting or if they're happy with the agreement.

"It's an individual prerogative as to how people continue to fight," he said. "Personally, the protest is finished. I think we've accomplished what we wanted to accomplish."

Nuke said the four conditions set out by Gauthier have been met, so he personally plans to wait to see what happens before protesting again.

If everything goes as promised, he said he'll be satisfied.

Not everyone agreed with Nuke.

Protester Max Blake said he wants to continue the protest.

"I'm old enough that I can eat fish and die but my children, grandchildren and for generations after, they're not going to be able to eat the fish."

"That's ridiculous. What a thing to do."

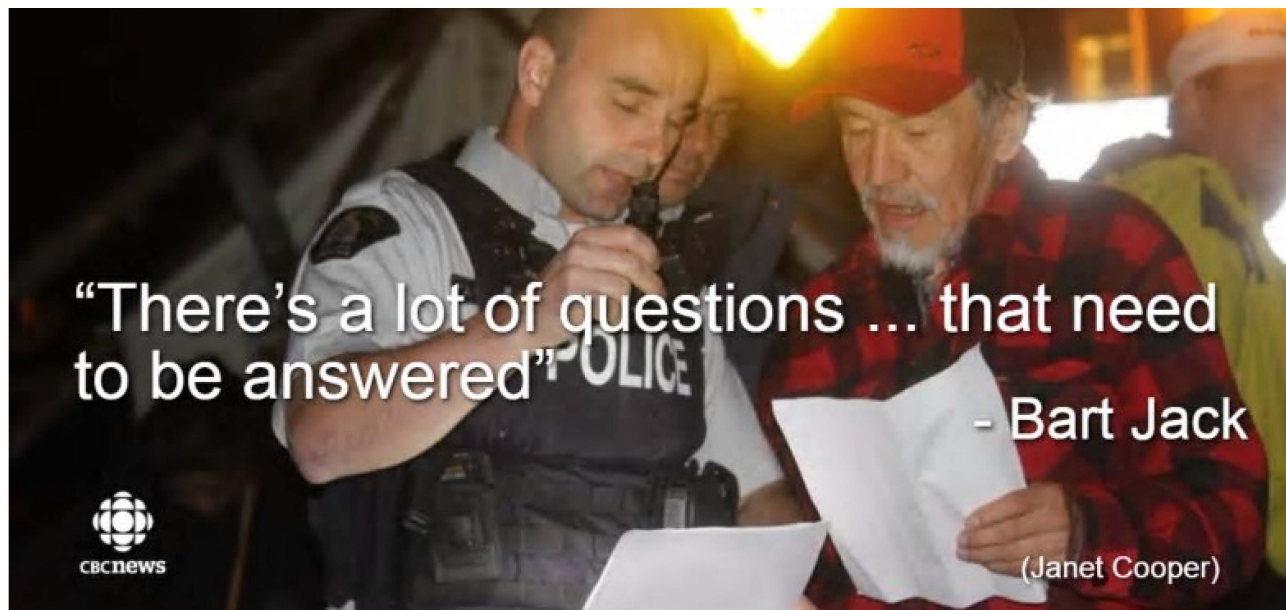
Blake said he's not happy with the deal struck among Indigenous leaders and the premier.

"That's not good enough," he said. "The movement started from the ground up, not the three leaders down. They gave in. We didn't give in."

## Nalcor responds







Innu leader Bart Jack says protesters are not sure what to think about the agreement reached early Wednesday morning. (Janet Cooper/Facebook)

In a statement, Nalcor CEO Stan Marshall said he welcomed the deal.

He said Nalcor's immediate priority is to bring operations at the Lower Churchill site back to normal and continue work to ready the site infrastructure for the winter months.

The costs of the new agreement for Nalcor and the effect on the planned schedule for the project is still being determined, said Marshall.

He added that Nalcor is "committed to completing the Muskrat Falls Project in a manner consistent with best practices for the safety of our workers and the public, and for the protection of the environment."

## Protesters still have questions

Protester Marjorie Flowers said many in the group still have questions, but as a group they accept the outcome.

"There's some questions, there's some anxieties, there's some concerns," she said. "Personally, I think it boils down to trust and deceptions that have happened with Nalcor to date."

"People need to see it unfold as it is promised and signed off on from the conference last night before we can say we're very pleased."



Denise Cole, a leader of the protests outside Confederation Building on Tuesday, told reporters she isn't ready to accept the deal reached between Innu leaders and the provincial government until she knows more. (CBC)

Innu protester Bart Jack said the demonstration created something "beyond belief."

"We will now be in a position to work with all of the Aboriginal groups, the Metis and the Inuit, to formulate one opinion about the project," he said.

"I'm very pleased with that; that's something that's historical, unprecedented.

“We're not sure of what we're agreeing to, we are not sure how productive it will be, we're not sure how it's going to end up.”

- Bart Jack

But they're still ambivalent about what's to come, he said.

"We're not sure of what we are agreeing to, we are not sure how productive it will be, we're not sure how it's going to end up," he said. "There's a lot of questions in the future that need to be answered."

Denise Cole, a leader of Tuesday's 12-hour demonstration outside Confederation Building, said she will continue to move forward with her demands until she gets clarity.

"For me, I'm determined," Cole said. "I'm still determined. I need to know what all of this means."

Meanwhile, the RCMP is cautioning drivers about travelling on Route 510 near the Muskrat Falls site.

"A high volume of traffic, both moving and parked, as well as a large number of pedestrians are expected in the area throughout the afternoon," an RCMP statement said.

The maraton meeting which started Tuesday afternoon and continued until the early hours Wednesday concluded with the promise of further independent assessment and a special committee to look into methylmercury concerns from the flooding of the reservoir. The provincial government will also look at further clearing of the area.

Cole said she wants to know more details before accepting that Nalcor and the provincial government have done all they can. She is also worried about things not addressed in the meeting, including the North Spur stabilization and criminal charges against the protesters who overtook the work site last Friday.

Her skepticism was echoed by Charlotte Wolfrey, a Rigolet woman in St. John's for Tuesday's protest.

Wolfrey, a representative of the Make Muskrat Right movement, was one of [nine people arrested](#) when protesters blocked the gates to the work site Oct. 17.

"I do have some sense of relief," she told Labrador Morning. "It sounds like they are gonna do what they should have done in the first place, which is test to see what happens. I don't know how binding that is. People can say anything."

Cole said what happens next is a personal choice for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

"Going home and stopping are two very different things. People will have to make their own decision on that."

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With files from Carolyn Stokes, Ramona Dearing, Katie Breen and Labrador Morning



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