

ENERGY

Premiers impressed by Muskrat Falls

Ontario premier calls Muskrat Falls an example of a 'national project'

BY DEREK MONTAGUE

TC MEDIA

HAPPY VALLEY-GOOSE BAY

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne hailed and praised the Muskrat Falls hydro project as a "national project" during a recent tour of the construction site.

Wynne toured the site with Premier Paul Davis, Yukon Premier Darrell Pasloski and Northwest Territories Premier Bob McLeod.

Wynne also stressed the need for provinces to work together on issues of energy production.

"A project of this scale is really a national project," she said.

"It's one of the reasons I'm so committed to obtaining an energy strategy, because I think the more that we can find ways to work together and take advantage of those vast resources that we've got in this country, the better off we will be.

"I think it's really important that we start to look at our resources in a national framework. That's why the Canadian energy strategy is important. And, of course, we have to work officials-to-officials and hammer out the

bilateral and trilateral arrangements, but that's going to be more possible because of projects like this."

The Ontario premier also indicated her province might be interested in importing Muskrat Falls power from Newfoundland and Labrador when the project goes online.

"That's why our officials are in conversation already. You will know that we have already made an arrangement with Quebec," Wynne said. "We are open to finding ways of working with our colleague provinces, because I think that it is important that we understand that these are resources that can benefit the whole country."

The premiers from across the province were in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, along with Aboriginal First Nations Chief Perry Bellegarde, for a July 15 meeting to discuss a wide range of aboriginal issues across Canada.

Davis said he would use the opportunity to invite the premiers to see Muskrat Falls firsthand.

"While here in Labrador, we thought it would be an oppor-

tune time for premiers to come visit the Muskrat Falls site ... and grasp a better understanding of what's taking place here," Davis said.

The four premiers who attended the tour, along with Natural Resources Minister Derrick Dalley and Justice and Public Safety Minister Darin King, first flew over the Muskrat Falls site by helicopter. They then did a tour by bus, seeing the construction of the massive spillway and powerhouse facilities, as well as meeting some of the workers.

Pasloski said he was impressed by the project, and how local Aboriginal people seem to be benefitting directly from it.

"Coming from the North, we haven't contributed a lot towards greenhouse gas emissions, but we're living with climate change significantly in the North," Pasloski said.

"So we certainly applaud this effort. In the Yukon right now, we're in the process of identifying a site for a new dam as well, not to this enormity of course ... but I think it's a great opportunity to see Aboriginal people in the area benefit as well."

McLeod also praised hydropower as an energy source that can help Canada cut down on greenhouse gases. The Northwest Territories leader also mentioned his government has interest in producing hydropower up North.

"We have a lot of hydro potential in the Northwest Territories. This is something that we aspire to. Ironically, the two hydro sources that we have for electricity, we're running into problems with drought conditions, where we don't have enough water to replenish our reservoirs," McLeod said. "So we're here to see how you do a big project like this, and this is something we hope that we will eventually do in the Northwest Territories.

"If we're talking across the country about how we reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, it's projects like this, and the fact that we shut down our coal-fire plants, those are the kinds of things we're going to have to do in order to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions."





DEREK MONTAGUE/THE LABRADORIAN

Yukon Premier Darrell Pasloski, Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Paul Davis, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne and Northwest Territories Premier Bob McLeod pose in front of the powerhouse construction site at Muskrat Falls.