

UNCLE GNARLEY

Opinions On Newfoundland Politics That Bite

Thursday, 27 April 2017

DRAGGING THE REPORT ON THE FORMWORKS COLLAPSE OUT OF NALCOR



Nalcor V-P Gil Bennett

One worker was taken to hospital and seven others received first aid on May 29, 2016 when a major section of the formworks collapsed, during a concrete pour at the site of the powerhouse on the Muskrat Falls project.

Nalcor V-P Gilbert Bennett promised a full investigation and report. One year later, Nalcor is still raggng the puck, although — following some poking and prodding from this scribe — there are signs that one is finally forthcoming.

The report ought to have been on Gil Bennett's desk within at most 48 hours of the collapse. In the real world of construction — not the one Gil inhabits, but certainly on the Hebron GPS (which reported no lost time accidents) — real managers and their senior bosses demand no less.

The report would have identified what had gone wrong, defined an immediate fix of a gap in construction or inspection practices, and determined whether anyone had signed off on any part of the installation without first performing their due diligence. In such a case, the report would have also confirmed their replacement.

Indeed, no manager - unless he is completely clueless - would ever give the OK to place concrete in forms without first knowing all the causes which led to the failure.

The scheduled work entailed a large concrete pour. It was not the last — not even close. The necessity to proceed safely — keeping in mind the schedule — would have signaled the importance of quickly getting to the bottom of the incident.

Formwork is the term given to either temporary or permanent molds into which concrete or similar materials are poured. In the context of concrete construction, the falsework supports the shuttering molds.

Formwork - Wikipedia
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Formwork>



But management on the project, being what it is, did not order the concrete to be kept wet for easier removal and inspection. Days of men and jackhammers removing the material, weeks later, conjures an image too foolish

to describe.

The Independent Engineer offered a glimpse into Nalcor's inspection and diligence practices in his [Report dated November 2, 2016](#) — based upon a site visit which occurred July 11-15, 2016. I noted in a [Blog Post dated December 8, 2016](#) the following excerpt, the IE's Report having been released to the public only days before:

Design issues, faulty materials (some of the formwork timbers suffered from dry rot) and shoddy construction have been identified as potential contributing factors in the incident. Formwork in Draft Tubes #3 and #4, as well as plans to reconstruct formwork for #2 were under review at the time of the site visit and both wood and steel forms systems were under consideration. An example of poor construction work could be seen in old formwork in Unit 3 (Photo C.12) where the steel column is misaligned with the wooden beam that it is supporting.

If the Independent Engineer was able to report "design issues, faulty materials [including] dry rot..." roughly six weeks after the incident, Nalcor must have known too — likely much earlier.

On December 9, 2016 I placed the following request to Nalcor via ATIPPA. Nalcor's reply is seen at the end of the excerpt:

Re: Your request for access to information under Part II of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015* (File #: PB/849/2016)

On December 9, 2016, Nalcor Energy ("Nalcor") received your request for access to the following records:

Please provide a copy of the Report into the collapse of concrete formwork described by V-P Gilbert Bennett "to look at all aspects of the work and understand what the root cause was" which the undersigned understands is now completed.

Please be advised that Nalcor has no records responsive to your request. The investigation is not yet complete.

THE WORLD
HAVE
FIGURED
OU..

EQUILIZATION -
DEFINING
WHAT IS FAIR
AND
EQUITABLE...

HEALTH CARE:
WHO WILL FIX
WHAT'S
BROKEN?

- ▶ March (9)
- ▶ February (8)
- ▶ January (7)
- ▶ 2016 (98)
- ▶ 2015 (88)
- ▶ 2014 (90)
- ▶ 2013 (106)
- ▶ 2012 (64)

Nalcor knew — certainly by July 2016 — why the formwork had collapsed but it had no Report to offer, even in December 2016. The investigation, Nalcor said, is "not yet complete".

On March 23, 2017 — nearing the one-year mark of the incident — I wrote, again, asking for the Report. The following excerpt confirms the request:

On March 23, 2017, Nalcor Energy received your request for access to the following records:

Please provide a copy of the Report into the collapse of concrete formwork at the Muskrat Falls site reported to have occurred on May 29-30, 2016. The Report was described by V-P Gilbert Bennett as intended "to look at all aspects of the work and understand what the root cause was".

Another month went by.

On Monday, April 24th, 2017 Nalcor offered this reply to the ATIPPA request:

We have considered your request in light of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015* (the *ATIPPA*), and access to these records has been refused in accordance with the following exception to disclosure, as specified in the Act:

22. (1) *The head of a public body may refuse to disclose a record or part of a record that...*

(b) *is to be published or released to the public within 30 business days after the applicant's request is received.*

In accordance with section 22(2), you will be advised when this information is published. For your information, it will be published on the Muskrat Falls project website which can be found at www.muskratfalls.nalcorenergy.com.

After more than a year of trying to complete (or is it hide?) a Report on a single incident — albeit one having the potential for a fatal consequence — Nalcor could not suppress its arrogance, using a rarely invoked clause to delay the Report some more.

Was Nalcor upset that a citizen had not forgotten the incident, refusing to let it to be quietly filed?

As it stands, the report will show up when he sees fit — sometime during the next 30 days.

The simple truth is that Nalcor can count itself very lucky — based upon private reports of the incident — that they do not have to answer for at least one death, given that one or more of the workers was practically buried under the wet concrete.

What would have been wrong with Gilbert Bennett - or Project Manager Paul Harrington - standing up in front of their workers and the public as concrete began to pour again to explain what had gone wrong and the lessons they had learned.

At minimum, they owed that to the workers who nearly lost their lives.

But the lack of transparency continues - there is no leadership from Stan Marshall and none from the Ball government.

Think about it. What can Nalcor boast, if not even a good safety record?

If the public thinks anything has improved, they should look at Nalcor's project report for February, 2017 which was issued April 17, 2017. There were three lost-time accidents in that month alone. For the project to date -12 lost time accidents (see exhibit below). Again, for Hebron there were zero!

That is a disastrous record for Nalcor and no one - not even a Trade Union Head has a word to say. If Muskrat was headed by real management there would be firings and full reasons given.

6.0 Safety and Environment 6.1 Safety

LCP and all contractors working on the Muskrat Falls Project have a relentless commitment to the safety of workers and the public. The following table o Safety indicators and measurements for the month of February and for the project to date.

Indicator	February 2017	Project to Date
Orientations completed	741	42,581
Safety Step Backs completed	29,794	1,158,233
Work site inspections	1,285	41,963
Lost-time injuries	3	12
Medical aid incidents	1	90

How long will the public stand for it?

Posted by [Des Sullivan](#) at [Thursday, April 27, 2017](#)

Reactions: [funny \(1\)](#) [interesting \(2\)](#) [informative \(2\)](#)

Labels: [ATIPPA](#), [Collapsed formworks Muskrat Falls project](#), [Nalcor](#)