



Nfld. & Labrador

Abandoning Muskrat Falls 'dome' is Astaldi's decision, Nalcor VP says



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Astaldi Canada had plans to build a specialized covering or 'dome' over the Muskrat Falls hydroelectric generation facility, however it was aborted in December after being halfway completed. (CBC)

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A recent decision by Astaldi Canada to scrap plans to build a specialized dome over the powerhouse units at the Muskrat Falls construction site is within its realm of decision-making, says Nalcor vice-president Gilbert Bennett

The cover — sometimes called the dome — was supposed to shield the hydroelectric-generation facility at Muskrat Falls from the elements so work could continue through the winter. The original deadline for completion was December.

- [Muskrat Falls: Astaldi adapting following dispute over 'dome'](#)

However, only two of the four units were covered. A steel shell around the other two units was recently torn down and sent to the scrap yard.

Bennett said while the dome may have been partially constructed — possibly delaying Astaldi's current operations at Muskrat Falls, it's not Nalcor's role to criticize Astaldi's ongoing work.

"Our main concern is seeing the powerhouse and spillway get built," he told CBC's *Labrador Morning*.

"How they do it, the techniques they use, are ultimately their decision."

Milestones are more important than processes

Earlier this week, political commentator Desmond Sullivan said the situation indicated 'poor planning' on Nalcor's part.

However, Bennett said Sullivan's perception is out of touch with the realities of such a large construction project.

"To say it is poor planning on our part, I can't accept that comment," Bennett said.

"Ultimately the approaches used are within the domain of our construction contractors. Specifically how they go about doing that is within their realm."

Bennett understands it may look like a waste to tear something down when it is halfway built, but in a project like Muskrat Falls it's necessary to look at the long term.

"On a day-to-day basis, all of our contractors have situations where they're ahead a little bit and where they're behind a little," he said.



Nalcor VP Gilbert Bennett said Astaldi has to make their own judgements about how it gets to the end goals of the Muskrat Falls project. (CBC)

"The progress is improving, and their objective is to meet the milestone at the end of the project. They will still need to recover the delays that they've seen."

He said that time can still be made up, as most of the contractors have some 'float time' to work with.

"We've seen this in situations such as diversion in the river, where there is some talk of moving milestone from 2016 to 2017," he said.



Construction of the Muskrat Falls Generation Facility began in 2013 and is expected to take four to five years. (CBC)

"If you improve your process and improve your productivity, you can still get there on time in the end."

Long-term view needed, says Bennett

Bennett insists obsessing over every bit of wastage on a job site is not the proper way to move ahead with a project as large in scope as Muskrat Falls. He said the dome is just an example of that.

"I look at that coverage system the same way I look at a long list of consumable items and temporary components that are going to be used as part of the project," he said.

"It was a temporary installation to get to the end goal."



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