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From : "Hayes-Butt, Paula"

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Subject : CBC - Nalcor ordered to increase clearing at Muskrat Falls reservoir

## Nalcor ordered to increase clearing at Muskrat Falls reservoir

### 'This is a shift in government policy. We are raising the bar,' says environment minister

By Marilyn Boone, [CBC News](#) Posted: Oct 19, 2016 12:48 PM NT Last Updated: Oct 19, 2016 8:28 PM NT

After weeks of pressure and protests, the Newfoundland and Labrador government is ordering Nalcor to remove more forest cover at the Muskrat Falls reservoir to further address concerns surrounding methylmercury.

But protesters in Labrador say it's not enough.

Minister of Natural Resources Siobhan Coady and Environment Minister Perry Trimper made the announcement at a news conference at Confederation Building in St. John's Wednesday.

"Nalcor has been conducting themselves in a way that's consistent with other hydroelectric projects. However, the anxiety and concern that has manifested itself in the last few days in particular outlines that that is not sufficient," said Trimper.

"To that end, I have required Nalcor today to implement a clearing as much forest cover as possible scenario."

A review will be done on whether it is possible or necessary to remove all soil from the reservoir.

"We see an opportunity here to raise the bar, to respond to the concerns and we're willing to do that," said Trimper.

### 'No deal,' protesters say

Government said it takes the concerns of the Innu Nation, the Nunatsiavut government and the NunatuKavut Community Council "very seriously."

But Wednesday afternoon, protesters at the Muskrat Falls site said they were skeptical of the government's latest move.

"Cut all the vegetation, drop all the charges and we'll consider taking down our tents," said one of the men camped out at the project gate. "No deal."

Nine people were arrested Monday at a blockade outside the Muskrat Falls worksite, and demonstrations have disrupted work at government offices in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Confederation Building in St. John's.

Wednesday afternoon, 70 to 80 protesters took action again — breaching a court injunction and crossing the Trans-Labrador Highway to block traffic in front of the main gate to the Muskrat Falls site around 5:30 p.m.

Those who were arrested on Monday were staying in the safe zone, even if protesters on the opposite side were chanting and encouraging everyone to join them.

Police were in the area recording protesters and directing traffic.

Inuk artist Billy Gauthier, who started a hunger strike on Oct. 14, has also rejected Trimper's appeal that he reconsider.

Wednesday also saw an anti-Muskrat Falls protest in New Brunswick.

### Harvard professor 'shocked and surprised'

In a strange twist, Harvard University officials were surprised by a statement in Wednesday's news release from the environment department which said "the Provincial Government will be requiring Nalcor to fund a further study, to be conducted by Dr. Elsie Sunderland's research laboratory at Harvard University."

Paul Karoff, Assistant Dean for Communications with Harvard's school of engineering and applied sciences said the professor has had no discussions with the government of Newfoundland and Labrador about undertaking further research.

"In fact, Prof. Sunderland has NOT agreed to conduct such a study and absolutely will NOT accept funding from Nalcor in support of any aspect of her scientific research," he wrote in an email to CBC News Wednesday, adding that the report was "surprising and shocking" for the professor to read.

Trimper told CBC *Here and Now* that the issue may be a communications breakdown, and that Sunderland had been communicating with both his office and the Nunatsiavut Government.

"I can assure you...we recently received a proposal that we developed with Dr. Sunderland via the Nunatsiavut Government," he said. "

I think there's a telephone conversation needed to clear this up."

## **Flooding will happen**

The government directive to Nalcor comes as the Crown corporation was poised to begin flooding the new reservoir as part of the dam and powerhouse construction at Muskrat Falls.

The company has said that water levels will rise 25 metres initially, and up to 39 metres by 2019.

Coady said the initial flooding will "have to continue" to avoid assets being damaged by ice buildup on the Churchill River, but there could be delays.

"If folks are trying to find a way to stop this project, they're probably not going to be very happy with what we're saying today," said Trimper.

"If they're concerned about the environment and human health, they should recognize that this is huge progress. This is a shift in government policy. We are raising the bar."