

Ratepayers won't pay for Muskrat Falls, somehow: premier

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Premier Dwight Ball (left) said Wednesday ratepayers won't be on the hook for Muskrat Falls, but he did not reveal a specific plan. He was at the launch of Windsor Lake byelection candidate Paul Antle (holding red folder). - David Maher

Premier Dwight Ball says ratepayers will not bear the burden of Muskrat Falls, nor will the project cause tax increases, both claims he offered little evidence for Wednesday.

"We just want to clarify that there's no way that ratepayers in our province could pay for or should pay for the burden of Muskrat Falls," Ball said.

Ball said government wants to treat the cost of Muskrat Falls like other government debt, to ensure electricity rates will not double.

But Ball said exactly how that plan – to not increase electricity rates or taxes – will work remains to be seen.

"This then becomes a government issue and we'll deal with this debt like we deal with every other debt that we've been left and situation that we need to fix. With that said, another question will be how will we know what that looks like," he said.

"That work is continuing — that work is being done. There's a number of options that we have to consider, how we would handle the Muskrat Falls debt."

Ball would only vaguely gesture at dealing with the federal government, increasing provincial revenues, and economic diversification as part of the plan.

"There are a number of options. We will include people like the federal government. It will include a number of different things," he said.

"We will make sure that we leave no stone unturned to deal with all the issues that we've been able to fix that we've been left with as a result of the Tory government."

Ball made the announcement at the campaign launch for Liberal candidate Paul Antle, who will take on PC Leader Ches Crosbie in Windsor Lake. The NDP have yet to announce a candidate.

Government also set the date for the Windsor Lake just minutes before Antle launched his campaign. The byelection will take place on Sept. 20.

More to come

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