



Nfld. & Labrador

## 'Need not fret' at the prospect of doubling electricity rates, says premier



Engaging the Public Utilities Board is a crucial step in controlling rates, says Ball

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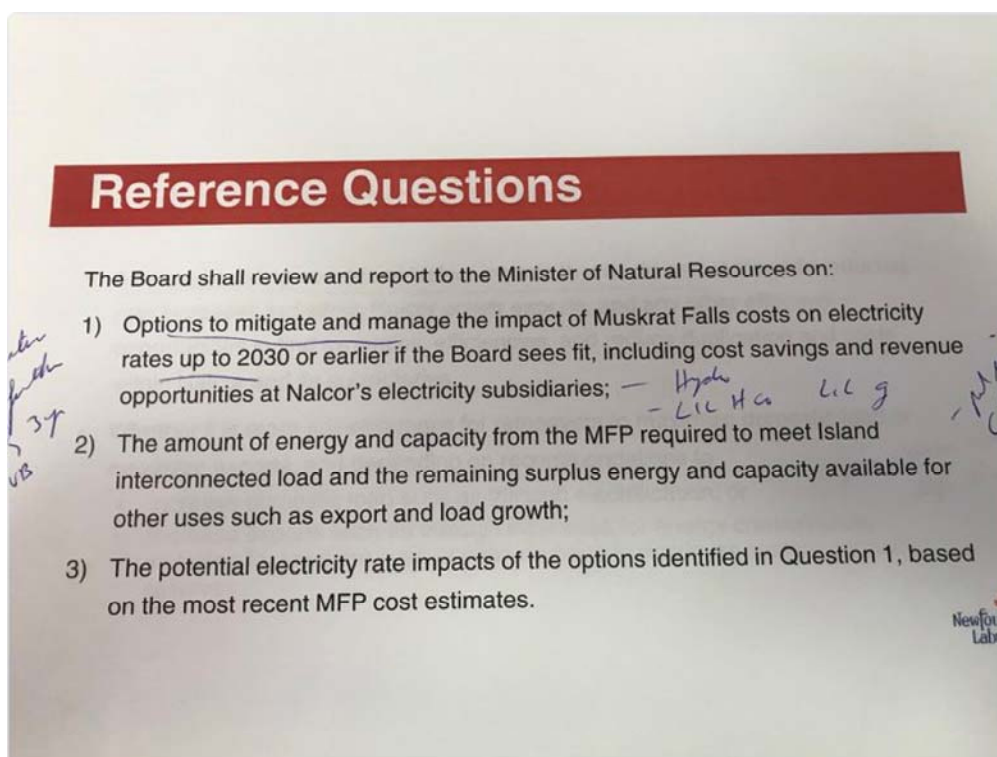


Premier Dwight Ball, with Natural Resources Minister Siobhan Coady, admitted on Wednesday that the provincial government is correcting a massive wrong, and the province's greatest fiscal mistake. (Terry Roberts/CBC)

The premier of Newfoundland and Labrador says engaging the Public Utilities Board is a crucial step toward mitigating the high electricity costs associated with Muskrat Falls.

"Getting this project under control is our legacy," said Dwight Ball at a Wednesday afternoon news conference in St. John's.

The provincial government has asked the PUB to examine options to reduce the impact of the hydro project on power rates, which are predicted to reach 22.89 cent per kilowatt hour in 2021.



**Terry Roberts**

@TRobertst

. @GovNL confirms it will have the PUB examine options to reduce impact of Muskrat Falls on power rates, which are forecasted to reach 22.89 c/kw in 2021. Here are the reference questions. #nlpoli

3:11 PM - Sep 5, 2018 · St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

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Without action, current power rates would double for customers, Ball said.

The premier admitted locking out the PUB was a big mistake by the Tories who sanctioned the project and the government was "correcting a massive wrong" with the announcement.

## 'Greatest fiscal mistake' in N.L. history: premier

The PUB have been asked to produce an interim report on mitigation options for government by Feb. 15, 2019, with a final report due by Jan. 31, 2020. The reports will be made available to the public and include an examination of Nalcor.

"As you all know the latest cost update on the ill-conceived Muskrat Falls project sanction by the PC Party is \$12.7 billion," Ball said.

"It's approximately \$24,000 for every single person in Newfoundland and Labrador. I feel that this project is the greatest fiscal mistake in Newfoundland and Labrador's history."

- [Time to look for other solutions to 'ugly problem' of Hydro prices, says consumer advocate](#)

Ball reiterated that the provincial Liberal government will not allow for rate increases to occur, nor will taxes increase to pay for the project, and said the project will be finished in 2021.

The Muskrat Falls spillway showing two of its five gates open. (Twitter/Nalcor)

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Natural Resources Minister Siobhan Coady added that by this past June overall construction of Muskrat Falls had been completed by 92 per cent, and electricity rates will lower by 2021.

"We are looking at all options to save money, to generate revenue and to address funding and operations," she said. "We will leave no stone unturned, no option unconsidered."

## **Opposition proposed bringing back PUB previously**

Ches Crosbie was at the announcement. The PC leader said bringing the PUB back into the fold for Muskrat Falls was something he had lobbied for in the past.





PC Party leader Ches Crosbie says he recommended the process of bring back the Public Utilities Board previously, only now is the Liberal government adapting it. (Bruce Tilley/CBC)

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"That represents progress, but the problem is that once the Public Utilities Board identifies what Premier Ball refers to as 'the gap,' what do we do with it? We still have no means and no hint from them as to how they're going to vaporize that gap or make it go away."

Provincial NDP leader Gerry Rogers was more candid about how she felt about the move.

Leader of the the NDP Gerry Rogers says something isn't right about the Liberals bringing in the PUB now after calling for their involvement since the beginning of the Muskrat Falls project.  
(Bruce Tilley/CBC)

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"This is a sham. There's nothing new that was announced here. We've been calling for the involvement of the PUB since the very beginning of this project," Rogers said.

She questions the timing, given that the premier first mentioned rate mitigation only last month in launching Liberal candidate Paul Antle's campaign in the Windsor Lake byelection, a vote needed after the resignation of Cathy Bennett.

"The Liberals have been in power for almost three years, and now during the byelection they say they're going to bring the PUB in. This is fishy. This doesn't pass the smell test."

*With files from Terry Roberts*

