

POLITICS

# Coady beefs up Muskrat Falls oversight

BY JAMES MCLEOD  
THE TELEGRAM

More than a year after an independent consultant recommended that the government should urgently beef up management oversight of the Muskrat Falls project, Natural Resources Minister Siobhan Coady announced she is adding four new appointees to the government's existing oversight committee.

Jason Muise, Jim Feehan, Sterling Peyton and Vanessa Newhook are being brought in from outside the government and have professional experience relevant to the Muskrat Falls project.

The Muskrat Falls project is far behind schedule and billions of dollars over budget, and through almost every stage — from initial conception to construction — there have been concerns raised by critics about a lack of proper corporate

governance and oversight to keep the project on track.

In 2014, responding to those criticisms, the government announced the formation of a Muskrat Falls oversight committee made up of senior government bureaucrats who would keep watch over the project development and report publicly four times per year on how things were going.

For a while, the committee reported fairly regularly, but it hasn't issued a report publicly since December 2015, around the same time the Liberal government was sworn in to office.

The Liberals, upon taking office, ordered an independent review of the Muskrat Falls project by consulting firm EY, and one of the reports they got back called for urgently needed additional project oversight and governance. That was in April 2016.

"We've been pretty busy

doing a whole lot of things with Muskrat Falls," Coady said, explaining why this hasn't been tackled already.

Coady specifically pointed to the appointment of CEO Stan Marshall and the creation of a new, expanded Nalcor board of directors as other means of added corporate governance.

Coady said the oversight committee has still been working — even though the government website, which is supposed to post minutes of their meetings, hasn't seen any updates since November of last year.

"The oversight committee has been doing their work with regard to the Astaldi contract, the loan guarantee, looking at all the things we've put in place over the last year," Coady said.

"They know that one of their responsibilities is reporting publicly, and they will be doing so."

Jason Muise is an engineer with expertise in project de-

livery.

James Feehan is a Memorial University economics professor who was one of the outspoken critics of Muskrat Falls in its early stages.

Sterling Peyton is a former career bureaucrat, including roles with the federal Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and deputy minister for the provincial department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

Vanessa Newhook is an accountant with experience in policy development, governance and negotiations. She is also a former provincial government bureaucrat.

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Coady

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