

Liberal leader opposes transmission line plan

BYCORYHURLEY

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Yvonne

Jones says the government and its energy corporation didn't give the required attention and effort in hatching a proposal of a transmission line through Gros Morne National Park.

The Liberal leader said Nalcor's idea of installing the line from the Lower Churchill hydroelectric project should not be in the cards.

The idea has received much criticism and opposition from environmental groups and Parks Canada.

"When this was all launched, this was the only option there," Jones told *The Western Star* Friday. "It is only because of the public backlash that they are out there today saying there are other options, but they expensive.

"Well, what are those other options? Did you look at them? How thoroughly did you look at them? Why aren't you providing that evidence and those options to the people, so we can have a full debate around what works and what doesn't?"

She questions whether, and to what level, there was consultation with Parks Canada and is concerned about the impact the project would have on Gros Morne National Park.

"I think they have just thrown this out there and didn't expect the amount of backlash they received, and now they are trying to backtrack a little bit," Jones said. "The reality is it looks sloppy, they haven't done their homework, and it looks like they haven't consulted the right people.

"I just think government thought they would put this there and not get any opposition because it was the almighty deal, government is high in the polls ... huge popularity, and bulldoze people into accepting it. I don't think that is going to happen with this issue."

The Opposition leader said the park has been a catalyst for economic activity and opportunity in western Newfoundland and the Northern Peninsula for years.

"I don't think we should compromise that for the sake of running a transmission line," she said.

She also said reports from Nalcor are that Holyrood will remain open even when this line is built and the infeed is provided. In fact, she said, the Opposition has learned Holyrood will have to continue to operate at 30 to 40 per cent of its capacity in order to take the energy coming off the infeed and convert it to power for residential use.

Jones said opposition against running a transmission line through Gros Morne National Park has no bearing on developing the Lower Churchill. She said there are alternate routes to feed energy into the island. "If this project is so financially crunched they can't look at spending the extra money on bringing a transmission line down and do it properly. In my mind, the project is just not financially feasible," she said.

She says that if the government had any kind of working relationship with the federal government or Quebec, an actual corridor to transmit this power through the province



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government or Quebec, an actual corridor to transmit this power through the province would be a possibility.

“I don’t think you can have developments at all costs,” Jones said. “They really have to sit down and start weighing out what the impact of this is going to be compared to what the benefits actually are to the people of the province. Whatever happens here, we are going to live with it for the rest of our lives. Making the right choices is much more important right now as opposed to choices that are politically opportunistic for government.”