
Political theatre

Liberals continue quest for answers on Upper Churchill redress

BY DAVE BARTLETT
dbartlett@thetelegram.com
THE TELEGRAM

The Liberals kept asking and the government kept saying no. For the third day in a row the opposition used question period in the House of Assembly to ask the government to reveal more information on the Churchill Falls (Labrador) Corp.'s (CF(L)Co) attempt to reopen the Upper Churchill agreement with Hydro-Quebec.

Premier Danny Williams was in Calgary, so Natural Resources Minister Kathy Dunderdale took most of the questions.

Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones said she still had questions despite the risk "of being deemed a traitor."

Williams accused Jones earlier in the week of "betrayal" and of being "too cosy" with Quebec.

Jones asked what the next step will be now that Quebec's minister of natural resources said Tuesday the contract would not be reopened.

Dunderdale said CF(L)Co will wait until it gets a letter from Hydro-Quebec before determining what the next step might be.

"This action lies solely within the purview of CF(L) Co, Mr. Speaker, not the government of Newfoundland and Labrador," replied the minister.

Jones also wanted more information on who has seen the legal opinions the province received from lawyers in Quebec.

Health Minister Jerome Kennedy took that question, as he attended some of the meetings with the lawyers when he was finance minister.

"In preparing a legal case there are documents that are solicitor-client privileged, and opinions which are maintained for our own use," Kennedy said.

Dunderdale said later the documents haven't been given to anyone.

Jones then pressed Kennedy to reveal what precedents CF(L)Co is basing its case on, as she did with the premier earlier in the week.

"What do the Liberals want us to do?" Kennedy asked, his voice rising. "Sit there and do nothing about this contract that's been stuck in our craw since 1969?"

"Here we go again," Jones replied. "When there's no answers, let's get the theatrics going."

"There is not one living, breathing soul in this province that (doesn't) want redress on the Upper Churchill," she yelled over the heckles from the government side of the House.

Jones then asked that the letter sent to Hydro-Quebec be tabled in the House.

Dunderdale replied it was CF(L)Co which sent that letter and recommended Jones ask the company for it.