

# Stan Marshall and the North Spur

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Nalcor CEO Stan Marshall gave himself a pat on the back at a symposium at Memorial University Thursday night. He talked about how the project has kept on target over the past year and applauded his decision to reorganize it into two separate streams, one for generation and the other for transmission.

The project is moving toward completion, with most of the “outside” work nearly done, but leaving some highly complex work to be completed, especially work relating to direct current technology. He talked about the importance of seeing the “big picture” and criticized everyone else for focusing on small parts of the project.

With respect, we, along with a small group of naysayers, saw the big picture right from the beginning, and unlike Marshall, we had the courage to speak up. If he and his employer, Fortis, had opposed the project from the beginning, that might have made the difference.

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all the engineering reports and satisfied himself that the dam is safe. He said that Nalcor had organized a team to review the remediation. His team dismissed concerns expressed by a “Norwegian” expert without giving them an opportunity to express their views directly.

Marshall has his own notion of what constitutes “due process.” He is happy to accept a review panel of his choosing and one which marginalizes the work of a team of respected Swedish, not Norwegian, experts. We do not think Stan's standard is appropriate. The first prerequisite of a review team is that it be independent of Nalcor. The second is that the expert panel be recognized authorities in their field. The third is that they must be mandated to review all the scientific evidence.

We have supported Grand Riverkeeper Labrador and the Labrador Land Protectors, who have consistently sought the appointment of an eminent panel of geotechnical experts to examine the science of the North Spur and its remediation. A petition for appointment of such a panel was signed by more than 1,000 people and presented in May 2017 on the steps of Confederation Building. No reply was received.

Such a panel would provide an opportunity for the engineering consultants who undertook the design work to attest to the quality of their recommended remediation and to the rigour of the science. It would also afford other experts, such as Drs. Lennart Elfgren and Stig Bernander of Lulea University in Sweden, to give evidence. It would allow for cross-examination of witnesses.

Such a panel must be constituted under the Public Inquiries Act. Only through such an open review of the science can those living close to Muskrat Falls sleep soundly, in the knowledge that the project has been given thorough and unbiased scrutiny.

The review model espoused by Nalcor's CEO is not acceptable. Nor was the condescending tone which Marshall took to those who raised questions. He rebuked those who focus on the details and who fail to see the big picture as clearly as he alone does.

He was put in his place by philosopher Sean Mcgrath, who said that Marshall himself fails to see the big picture, the trampling of democracy and democratic institutions which resulted when the project was sanctioned without due process, ignoring the Joint Environmental Panel and exempting the project from the scrutiny of the PUB. Marshall also failed to see the big financial and economic picture and how this project will inflict severe hardship when power rates escalate and “risk mitigation” translates into eroded social programs.

This project began because the standard of due process was inadequate, when the PUB was precluded from its normal role in approving capital projects. We are now told that the same unacceptable standard of due process is sufficient to deal with the North Spur. When will we ever learn?

While Marshall exudes confidence in the progress Nalcor has made in 2017, he failed to communicate an understanding of the gravity of the questions being raised concerning the safety and security of the North Spur. He made it clear that he will not support an independent review.

Government has been reluctant to overrule Marshall. What will it take for government to take action on its own? Sadly, we know the answer.

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