

Special Update for Members

The NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC) is pleased to provide this special update to members about the signing of an agreement with Nalcor Energy. This straightforward and flexible agreement will enable NCC to deliver additional programs and services that contribute to the overall health and well-being of NunatuKavut Inuit and communities.

The funding was budgeted for by Nalcor for possible wetland capping of a small area before impoundment. This was one of the recommendations presented to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador by the Independent Expert Advisory Committee (IEAC) back in April 2018 (see page two for background information on the IEAC).

The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador failed to provide a timely response to these recommendations, which meant that they would not be preceding with the wetland capping before

filling of the reservoir this summer. Further data provided by the Province through regular water monitoring has also “shown that methylmercury levels have, at no time, presented a risk to public health.” Once it was confirmed that wetland capping would not proceed, Nalcor offered the budgeted thirty million dollars for equal distribution to Labrador’s three Indigenous groups. This money is not compensation or part of any deal on methylmercury.

This agreement was signed on July 17, 2019 by President Todd Russell and Vice President James Holwell from NCC and CEO Stan Marshall and Director of Indigenous Affairs Kevin Burt from Nalcor. A copy of the full agreement can be found [here](#).

While this agreement was unexpected, NCC will ensure that the funds are used in a tangible way to address the needs and priorities of our people and communities.

NCC remains committed to the monitoring and mitigation of potential methylmercury impacts from the Muskrat Falls project. We have agreed to participate in the new proposed Muskrat Falls Monitoring and Health Management Oversight Committee, which was also part of the Province’s response to the final recommendations from the IEAC. While the terms of reference are still being finalized, this new body will look at activities like building a community-based methylmercury monitoring program, developing possible benchmarks for methylmercury in the ecosystem and carrying out human health management and public education campaigns.

We are confident that this new committee will build on the solid and integral work of the IEAC to address the potential impact of methylmercury on our rights, our health, our well-being and our way of life.

BACKGROUND

NCC has, for many years, raised serious concerns about the impacts and potential effects of the Muskrat Falls project on the environment and the health and way of life of NunatuKavut Inuit.

In 2015, NCC publicly supported the Make Muskrat Right campaign, launched by the Nunatsiavut Government to draw attention to the potential serious impacts of the Muskrat Falls project. NCC subsequently participated in on-the-ground action that led to an agreement with Labrador's three Indigenous groups and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador around methylmercury mitigation in October 2016. This included the formation of an Independent Expert Advisory Committee (IEAC) in early 2017, with a mandate to recommend options for reducing possible health risks from methylmercury.

The IEAC was an important and credible process that involved both independent, evidence-based science and Indigenous traditional knowledge from the three Indigenous groups in Labrador. It was comprised of an Independent Chair, an Oversight Committee and an Independent Expert Committee. Members of the Oversight Committee included: NCC; Nunatsiavut Government; Innu Nation; the affected municipalities; the provincial government; the federal government; and Nalcor. The Independent Expert Committee

consisted of six scientific experts and three Indigenous knowledge experts.

The IEAC issued its first set of recommendations to the NL Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment in September 2017. They included:

1. a feasibility study for removal of soil and vegetation from the future reservoir area;
2. changes to the aquatic monitoring plan; and
3. the finalizing of Nalcor's methylmercury modelling project.

These were all publicly accepted and implemented by the Province.

The IEAC released its second and final set of recommendations in April 2018, just before the end of the IEAC's mandate and subsequent closure of their office. The recommendations included:

1. undertaking a public information campaign related to the consumption of country food and water;
2. developing a community-based monitoring program;
3. negotiating an Impact Security Fund prior to full flooding; and
4. targeted soil removal and wetlands capping in the future reservoir area before impoundment.

All but the fourth recommendation received the full consensus of the IEAC; the Innu Nation supported covering the wetlands. NCC has had

repeated communication with the Premier, Ministers and departmental officials to provide a timely and clear response to this very important set of recommendations.

RESOURCES

To review the scientific research and recommendations provided as part of the IEAC's work, please visit www.ieaclabrador.ca

To review the data collected as part of the Provincial Government's Methylmercury Monitoring Plan, please visit https://www.mae.gov.nl.ca/methylmercury_mrf.html

Have a question or concern about this issue or what you read? Please contact us!

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