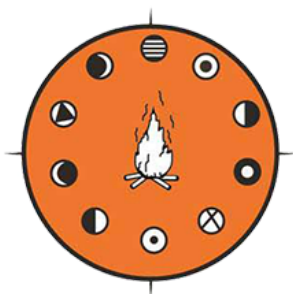


# QUEBEC HYDRO CLASH

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## Hydro-Québec must compensate First Nations for the impacts of its projects and facilities



### **Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador**

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**November 9, 2020**

Ms. Sophie Brochu  
President and CEO  
Hydro-Québec  
75 René-Lévesque Blvd. West  
Montreal, Quebec H2Z 1A4

**Subject :** Hydro-Québec must compensate First Nations for the impacts of its projects and facilities

Ms. Brochu;

The present letter concerns the recent announcements of several First Nations in Quebec and Labrador who have undertaken actions to obtain compensation for the infringement of their ancestral rights and territories by Hydro-Québec. The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) supports these First Nations and invites Hydro-Québec to put in place with them the necessary measures to move towards reconciliation.

The announcement of your appointment as Chief Executive Officer of Hydro-Québec was well received by First Nations. It indicated a wind of change at Hydro-Québec that was necessary to renew the relationship between the Crown corporation and First Nations. You mentioned in this regard that Hydro-Québec should make more efforts to improve its relations with First Nations. The AFNQL hopes that Hydro-Québec will be able to implement this call to action in order to establish harmonious relations with First Nations, to recognize that First Nations have rights and interests on the territory that precede Hydro-Québec's activities and that compensation is necessary for the impacts of Hydro-Québec's projects and installations on their ancestral territories.

Consequently, we hope that Hydro-Québec will respond favourably to First Nations in Quebec and Labrador who have taken steps on many occasions to obtain compensation for the impacts of Hydro-Québec projects.

On October 6, 2020, the Innu in Labrador filed a petition against Hydro-Québec and one of its partners in the Churchill Falls project to be compensated for the environmental, cultural and economic consequences resulting from the construction of the hydroelectric complex in the 1960s and 1970s. This project has had and continues to have major impacts on the environment and the rights of the Labrador Innu Nation. Archaeological sites, cemeteries, and resources essential to the practices of the Labrador Innu were destroyed by the Churchill River harnessing and by the flooding of a territory as large as Prince Edward Island.

It is unacceptable that Hydro-Quebec has flooded more than 6,500 square kilometers of Innu traditional territory without having consulted them, without having obtained their consent and without having ever acknowledged its responsibility and sought to compensate them for these consequential damages. This refusal to compensate them contrasts with the fact that the Innu Nation in Labrador managed to reach an agreement with another of Hydro-Québec's partners in the project (not covered by the action) to obtain a share of the compensation owed. It is also frustrating that the Labrador Innu Nation sought to reach an agreement with Hydro-Québec on this matter and that it was the Crown corporation's refusal to enter into any dialogue with them that led the Labrador Innu to file their claim.

The filing of the Labrador Innu request comes at a time when at least five First Nations in Quebec are publicly opposed to the Appalaches-Maine Interconnection project.

Indeed, the Anishnabe First Nation of Lac Simon, the Abitibiwinni First Nation, the Anicinape Community of Kitcisakik, the Innu Nation of Pessamit and the Atikamekw Nation

of Wemotaci recently announced that Hydro-Québec had to reach an agreement with them to compensate them for having caused significant impacts to their territories and rights, through the production of electricity, without having obtained their prior consent. More than 36% of the electricity destined for this export project to the United States comes from infrastructures built without the consent of the First Nations concerned in Quebec and which have nevertheless had considerable impacts on their rights and territories. Like with the Labrador Innu, Hydro-Québec has never sought to compensate these First Nations in Quebec for the exploitation of their territories.

Considering the perpetuity of the impacts of the projects described above, it is deplorable that Hydro-Québec is still contributing to the exploitation of the territory of the Innu Nation in Labrador and of the First Nations in Quebec and is causing such significant damage to the environment and the rights of First Nations without compensating them.

Hydro-Québec has a responsibility to correct this inequity and injustice and the exploitation of First Nations' resources and territories without their consent must stop. Hydro-Quebec can no longer decline its responsibility and blame it on the governments of Quebec and Canada. It is its installations and projects that infringe on the rights and territories of First Nations and it must assume the consequences. In this context, it is imperative that Hydro-Québec engage in a true reconciliation process with the First Nations in Quebec and Labrador, because the development and exploitation of natural resources can no longer be done to their detriment.

We hope that the announcements made following your appointment will be translated into concrete actions on the part of Hydro-Québec.

The AFNQL thus offers its support to the Innu Nation in Labrador and to the five First Nations in Quebec, all of which are seeking, through different means, to remind Hydro-Québec of the need to compensate for the impacts of its projects and installations. We are proud to support these First Nations in their efforts.

Please receive, Ms. Brochu, my sincere greetings,

**Ghislain Picard**

**Chief of the AFNQL**

c. c. Chief Eugene Hart, Sheshatshiu

Chief John Nui, Natuashish

Grand Chief Etienne Rich, Innu Nation

Chief Adrienne Jérôme

Chief Monik Kistabish

Chief Régis Pénosway

Chief Jean-Marie Vollant

Chief François Néashit

Mr. Ian Lafrenière, ministre des Affaires autochtones

Mr. Jonathan Julien,

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