



NUNATSIAVUT
Senani jarini kajusimanik pivallianimmut
10 Years of Continued Progress

ADMINISTRATIVE HEAD OFFICE

25 Ikajuktauvik Road, PO Box 70

Nain, NL, Canada A0P 1L0

Tel: 709.922.2942

Fax: 709.922.2931

nain_reception@nunatsiavut.com

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Progress made during Muskrat Falls meeting with Province, but still no commitment to fully clear reservoir

The Nunatsiavut Government maintains that every effort must be made to fully clear the Muskrat Falls reservoir before flooding starts, despite commitments from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to address, as much as possible, concerns over pending increases in methylmercury exposures downstream from the project.

Nunatsiavut President Johannes Lampe and Lands and Natural Resources Minister Darryl Shiwak met with Premier Dwight Ball, Environment and Climate Change Minister Perry Trimper and Natural Resources Minister Siobhan Coady on Monday to, once again, raise concerns over the impending threat to the health and wellbeing and way of life of Labrador Inuit as a result of the Muskrat Falls project.

“The Premier indicated that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador would not force Nalcor to fully clear the reservoir prior to initial flooding, scheduled to take place this fall,” notes President Lampe.

The initial flooding will affect some 25 per cent of the reservoir, raising water levels from the current 18 meters to 25 meters. The remaining 75 per cent of the reservoir is expected to be flooded sometime in 2019.

“It was disappointing to learn that full clearing would not be carried out before initial flooding, but the Premier did commit to immediately begin the process of examining the feasibility of fully clearing the remaining 75 per cent of the reservoir before full impoundment,” says President Lampe. “We advised the Premier that our position has not changed, and that the entire reservoir must be fully cleared of trees, vegetation and topsoil before any flooding takes place.”

The Premier also committed to further discussions on the other three Nunatsiavut Government recommendations as outlined in the Make Muskrat Right campaign, specifically:

- an Impact Management Agreement with the Nunatsiavut Government;
- establishing an Independent Expert Advisory Committee of recognized academic experts to advise on the design and audit of a rigorous, credible, and predictive monitoring program for downstream impacts of Muskrat Falls on the environment and health, using the best available scientific and Inuit knowledge; and
- granting Inuit joint decision-making authority over downstream environmental monitoring and management.



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“While we will continue to insist on full clearing, it is imperative that an effective monitoring program be established immediately to measure the amount of mercury entering into the ecosystem after initial flooding in order to provide a better understanding of the potential impacts,” says Minister Shiwak. “This monitoring program is essential in ensuring we are ready to deal with any impacts before they arise.”

On April 18, 2016, the Nunatsiavut Government released the independent Lake Melville Scientific Report, the result of four years of a multi-pronged investigation that has led to important scientific discoveries about how methylmercury accumulates in the Lake Melville ecosystem and how it will impact Inuit who rely on that ecosystem for food and resources.

According to the Harvard University report, hundreds of Labrador Inuit will be pushed above regulatory guidelines for exposure to methylmercury if the Muskrat Falls reservoir is not fully cleared of all wood, brush, vegetation and topsoil.

The research indicates that flooding will cause a sharp rise in methylmercury production in the Muskrat Falls reservoir within 120 hours that can remain elevated for several decades. Methylmercury exposures of Inuit living around Lake Melville are currently higher than the Canadian population, and will increase significantly after flooding unless the reservoir is fully cleared. Rigolet residents are at a higher risk of increased methylmercury exposure compared with Inuit living in the Upper Lake Melville area due to their greater reliance on locally-harvested food.

Media Contact:

Bert Pomeroy

Director of Communications

709-896-8582

709-899-0004 (cell)

bert.pomeroy@nunatsiavut.com