



NUNATSIAVUT
Senani jārini kajusimanik pivallianimmut
10 Years of Continued Progress

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STATEMENT

October 27, 2016
For Immediate Release

Following is a statement issued today by President Johannes Lampe:

Protecting our health, culture and way of life

As President of Nunatsiavut I want to thank all Beneficiaries of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement, the land protectors and supporters for the tremendous role they have played in our fight to protect the health and wellbeing of our people, as well as our culture and way of life.

I want to also thank Innu Nation Grand Chief Anastasia Qupee and NunatuKavut President Todd Russell for the leadership they have shown and for standing alongside the Nunatsiavut Government in helping to *Make Muskrat Right*.

The commitments made by Premier Dwight Ball and the Indigenous leaders, during a meeting this week in St. John's, are unprecedented for a project of this magnitude, and we fully expect those commitments to be honored.

With respect to the initial phase of flooding, the Premier presented us with several engineering reports that indicate water levels would have to rise this winter in order to protect the structural integrity of the project. We have asked that no flooding take place until those reports have been independently reviewed to verify this is indeed the case. We have engaged the services of an ice expert to review those reports. If that assessment confirms the rationale and the need to initiate the first phase of flooding this winter, then we would agree to allow water levels to rise to the minimal acceptable level. All along we have been told that would be seven meters, bringing levels from the existing 18 meters to 25.

What we do know from scientific research is that much of that seven meters has already been seasonally flooded, sometimes as much as 50 per cent, and that the production of methylmercury in this area would be minimal. We also know, again based on scientific evidence, that some areas are already inundated by water (marshes, for instance) where full clearing would make little or no difference on the amount of methylmercury entering into the ecosystem. Furthermore, scientific evidence has shown that methylmercury production peaks during the warmer months.

In order to minimize the impact of methylmercury as a result of the first phase of flooding, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has committed to ordering Nalcor to bring water levels back to normal, after the winter months, so that organic material, such as trees, shrubs and topsoil, can be removed from the reservoir area – again, on the advice of scientific experts. To our knowledge, this has never been done before anywhere in Canada, perhaps the world.

There was also agreement in establishing an Independent Expert Advisory Committee, to be comprised of representatives of the Nunatsiavut Government, Innu Nation, NunatuKavut Community Council, and federal, provincial and municipal governments. This committee will be mandated to seek an independent, evidence-based approach that will inform other decisions in relation to the project, as well as determine and recommend options for mitigating human health concerns related to methylmercury throughout the entire reservoir and in the Lake Melville ecosystem. Mitigation measures will be realized through utilizing best available science that incorporates Indigenous traditional knowledge, including clearing of the trees, vegetation and topsoil (as determined by science).

The Nunatsiavut Government will hold public meetings next week in Happy Valley - Goose Bay, Mud Lake, North West River and Rigolet to explain, in further detail, what was discussed and agreed upon during our meeting, and to provide the opportunity for people to ask questions.

This has been a long and hard-fought campaign, and we realize there is still much work that needs to be done. However, we are confident the commitments made by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will allow us to achieve our goal of protecting our health, culture and way of life. That was what this campaign was all about, and those who played a role in the success we have achieved deserve to be recognized for their commitment, courage, patience and strength.

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