



July 13, 2017

Make Muskrat Right

The Nunatsiavut Government, along with the NunatuKavut Community Council and the Innu Nation, have been working with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (the Province) to fulfill commitments made on October 26, 2016 to address concerns regarding the health and wellbeing of downstream populations as related to the Muskrat Falls project.

During the meeting, the Province provided the three Indigenous leaders with multiple engineering reports with respect to the timing and rationale of initial impoundment of the Muskrat Falls reservoir. The reports were independently reviewed and it confirmed the need to raise water levels to the minimum acceptable level of 25 metres. The Province also agreed to direct Nalcor, following initial impoundment, to release water from the reservoir in the spring of 2017 to allow the Churchill River to return to its natural flow in order to facilitate the opportunity for additional mitigation measures, which may include clearing trees, vegetation and/or soil removal.

As well, all parties agreed to establish an Independent Expert Advisory Committee (IEAC), to be comprised of representatives of the Innu Nation, Nunatsiavut Government, the NunatuKavut Community Council, and federal, provincial and municipal governments.

The Nunatsiavut Government fully expects the Province to honor the commitments made during the October meeting. Following is an update on some of the progress that has been made to date:

RELEASING WATER FROM RESERVIOR FOLLOWING INITIAL IMPOUNDMENT

Questions were raised by the Nunatsiavut Government following statements this spring from Nalcor's Chief Executive Officer, Stan Marshall, that water levels would not be lowered in the reservoir until at least the middle of July. In response, Nunatsiavut President Johannes Lampe reached out to Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Dwight Ball and expressed concerns that the commitment to lower levels in the spring was not being honored. On June 21, the Premier announced that Nalcor had been directed to immediately lower levels in a controlled and safe manner.

Water was initially released from the reservoir following the Premier's directive. The release was suspended as Nalcor was concerned about erosion of soil along the river bank within the reservoir. The Nunatsiavut Government has been assured that water levels continue to be lowered in a safe and controlled manner. Nalcor and the Province have also been asked to confirm when water levels are expected to reach natural levels.

INDEPENDENT EXPERT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (IEAC)

The Terms of Reference for the IEAC has been developed and agreed upon by all parties, and an independent chair is expected to be announced soon, along with members of the Oversight and Knowledge Experts committees.

The IEAC is mandated to seek an independent, evidence-based approach that will determine and recommend options for mitigating human health concerns related to methylmercury throughout the reservoir as well as in the Lake Melville ecosystem. Mitigation measures will be realized through utilizing best available science that incorporates Indigenous Traditional Knowledge.

While Nalcor has undertaken to remove some additional organic material from the reservoir, the Nunatsiavut Government will await recommendations from the IEAC to determine what steps need to be taken to ensure the best available knowledge will be used to determine appropriate mitigation measures to reduce impacts on human health.

ONGOING MONITORING

The Nunatsiavut Government continues to have direct input into the ongoing methylmercury monitoring program being conducted by Nalcor. However, there are still some concerns related to the detection limit of the laboratory analyzing the water and soil samples being collected. While most samples are below detection limits, it is important they still be measured. In order to do this, the Nunatsiavut Government has received agreement from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nalcor to collect duplicate samples for analysis at another laboratory in order to compare results.

As well, the Nunatsiavut Government has been conducting its own water monitoring program. Samples are collected monthly from four different sites (upstream and downstream of Muskrat Falls, from Goose River and from North West River). The samples are being analyzed at Harvard University.

For the summer methylmercury monitoring program, AMEC FW (the contractor for Nalcor) has agreed to allow residents of Rigolet trained in methylmercury sampling processes to collect samples in eastern locations of Lake Melville. Also, at least one Nunatsiavut Government trained methylmercury sampler will accompany AMEC FW, when space permits, on the western side of Lake Melville. This provides transparency, ensures accountability and creates local employment. To achieve this, the Nunatsiavut Government will facilitate a methylmercury sampling workshop in the next couple of weeks to train Beneficiaries from both Rigolet and the Upper Lake Melville area.

In partnership with Harvard University, additional soil flooding experiments were conducted using samples taken from the Muskrat Falls reservoir last fall. These soil cores were flooded for a month with water from the Churchill River and production of methylmercury was measured. The results are expected to be available soon.

Contact:

Bert Pomeroy

Director of Communications

(709) 896-8582

bert.pomeroy@nunatsiavut.com