



July 13, 2017
For Immediate Release

Federal plan to make minor changes to *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* disappointing, says Minister

Nunatsiavut's Lands and Natural Resources Minister Darryl Shiwak says he's disappointed with the lack of commitment from federal Environment and Climate Change Minister Catherine McKenna to make meaningful changes to the current *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*.

"The Nunatsiavut Government has been actively involved in the reviews of federal environmental legislation over the past year and was expecting positive changes would be made to ensure the concerns of Labrador Inuit and other Indigenous peoples would be meaningfully addressed under a planned revised *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*," notes Minister Shiwak. "The recently-released *Discussion Paper on the Environmental and Regulatory Reviews*, however, is raising serious doubts and concerns that any meaningful changes will be made."

In August 2016, Minister McKenna established an Expert Panel to review federal environmental assessment processes. The Nunatsiavut Government presented to the Panel, raised concerns over challenges with the current environmental regime and offered suggestions on how to make improvements. In its report, *Building Common Ground: A New Vision for Impact Assessment in Canada*, the Panel made numerous recommendations on how to strengthen environmental assessment processes.

"The Nunatsiavut Government strongly supported the Expert Panel's proposal for a new way to do federal environmental assessment in Canada, centred on sustainability, evidence, transparency, and reconciliation between Canada and Indigenous peoples," says Minister Shiwak.

Indigenous free, prior, and informed consent to projects, called for in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP), was a critical element of the Expert Panel's report. The federal discussion paper fails to adopt the Panel's vision and recommendations, and proposes minor changes that only tweak current environmental assessment law.

"The lack of credible evidence and inadequate Indigenous accommodation in the assessment for the Muskrat Falls hydroelectric project should be a cautionary tale," says Minister Shiwak. "We believe that none of the changes proposed by the federal government in its discussion paper would prevent another project like Muskrat Falls proceeding without taking into consideration the valid concerns of Indigenous populations and others adversely affected by such developments."

Minister Shiwak will raise the Nunatsiavut Government's concerns when he meets with Minister McKenna on July 20.

"If the federal government is committed to true reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous peoples, then the Minister must ensure new environmental assessment legislation stands up to the test of sustainability and encourages responsible development, with free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples."

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