



## **PRESS RELEASE**

For immediate publication

FORMAL NOTICES SERVED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF QUÉBEC AND HYDRO-QUÉBEC BY FIVE FIRST NATIONS

# **Short Circuit of Hydro-Québec's Interconnection Line with Maine**

**PESSAMIT (Canada), July 6, 2021 – A coalition of five First Nations in the Province of Québec, Lac Simon, Kitcisakik and Abitiwinni (Anishnabeg Nation), Wemotaci (Atikamekw Nation) and Pessamit (Innu Nation), have initiated a Formal Notice procedure intended to force the Government and Hydro-Québec to suspend the construction of the interconnection line between their own power grid and that of Maine. If the Province and Hydro-Québec don't comply, the case will be sent to Court with the intention of shutting down the hydroelectric export project to Maine and Massachusetts.**

This action expresses the Coalition's exasperation and anger towards the state-owned corporation and its sole shareholder, the Government of Québec. Both persist in ignoring the ancestral and constitutional rights of our First Nations on whose lands more than 36 % of the electricity destined for export to the United States is produced, without any of our communities having been consulted, compensated, or accommodated.

### **Years of injustice**

In their Formal Notice, our members argue that the process leading to the adoption by the Government of Québec of a decree allowing the construction of the interconnection line is unconstitutional, and tainted with serious illegalities. They also point out that the various installations built by Hydro-Québec on our ancestral lands (reservoirs, hydroelectric power plants, electric pylons, etc.) over a period of many decades, have adversely impacted wildlife, vegetation, and accessibility to our traditional hunting grounds, threatening our way of life, our culture, and our livelihood itself.

### **Who knows?**

To meet anticipated energy demand from the United States, Hydro-Québec is currently in the process of greatly increasing its installed capacity in our ancestral territories. Our First Nations, however, have noticed an unprecedented water deficit caused by climatic changes. Amongst other effects, this has triggered significant decrease in water levels during spring and summer. How will Hydro-Québec solve the squaring of the circle? It will have to provide Americans with large volumes of electricity during peak season, which in the Northeastern United States happens to be during spring and summer, precisely when water resources in our lands are reaching historically low levels year after year. As incredible as this may sound, Hydro-Québec doesn't have a clue.

### **Enough is enough!**

One thing is certain: whatever solution Hydro-Québec decides to adopt, our First Nations will directly suffer the repercussions since the state-owned corporation has always drained our ancestral territories' resources at the expense of our populations who are struggling to survive. But enough is enough! The time has come to address these ongoing abuses. We can no longer be on the wrong side of history.

### **Pass the buck**

Over a period of more than a year, the Coalition has taken our cause to different government forums, including the *Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement* (BAPE – Québec environmental review board), the Canada Energy Regulator, both Prime Ministers of Québec and Canada, and of course also to top management at Hydro-Québec. Our goal was to have our ancestral and constitutional rights recognised, considered, and fulfilled prior to the implementation of Hydro-Québec's "American Project". But everyone passed the buck. No one was ready to consider the obvious: that our First Nations' rights continue to be violated as they have for decades, and that the adoption by the Government of Québec of a decree allowing the construction of the interconnection line with Maine is both illegal and in blatant contempt of the honour of the Crown.

### **See you in Court**

If Hydro-Québec and its sole shareholder, the Government of Québec, both refuse to conduct the environmental studies and consultations required, and if they don't put in place appropriate insertion measures mandatory for all major projects taking place in our lands; if once again they decide to ignore our demands for consultation and compensation for past and anticipated damages; if they persist in applying discriminatory policies reminiscent of a dark period in Canadian history: we'll see them in Court! They should keep in mind, however, that the arc of history bends towards justice, and in such cases, the Supreme Court of Canada has always leaned towards correcting the wrongs inflicted on First Nations.

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