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Société Makivik

Makivik Corporation

Quebec Sustainable Development Plan

Public Consultations 2005

Makivik Corporation Brief

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1. *Initiative on sustainable development by the Government of Québec: a positive reception*

It is an awaited initiative to answer needs that exists throughout the Province of Québec. No one can be against virtue.

What can be wished though is a plan which application will respect and protect the Nunavik's distinctive characters of its environmental, social and economic elements.

Per example, the proposed legislation and strategy are a leap forward for the sustainable development that recognizes the past achievements and commitments made by the Province.

But, for Nunavik, some basics in several scopes of actions are still unachieved. For instance, and unlike elsewhere in the Province of Québec, there is actually no plan develop or funding available to municipalities for the disposal of their waste or the recycling of some materials. The Kativik Environment Advisory Committee already points out that important inequity at its Memoir.

2. *Connections with the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement Section 23 JBNQA: an innovative regime on sustainable development applicable to the Region since 1979.*

The regime established at section 23 of the JBNQA already integrates the environment and social aspects to any future development north of the 55th parallel. The adoption by the government of a legislation and strategy shall be seen as a way to reinforce the application of section 23 and to give complementary but not concurrent tools to organizations created under the same section (Environmental Quality Commission and the Environmental Advisory Committee).

3. *Application of legislation and strategy: respect and integration of specific Identity of the Nunavik region and inhabitants.*

The respect of distinctive identities follows the principles established by the Rio Declaration in June 1992, and supports the missions enounced by the Government of Québec when developing its plan on sustainable development.

The economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of the Nunavik Region and inhabitants differ substantially from the rest of the Province of Québec, which forms the specific Inuit Identity of Nunavik. That Identity is already recognized at Section 23 JBNQA where natives are granted a specific status within public consultation process.

Emphasis on the specific Identity of the Nunavik region and inhabitants is expected from the application of the Plan. It shall furthermore respect the special status granted to Natives under section 23 JBNQA on future developments.

Inuit Identity: some examples.

(i) Living environment:

The plan on sustainable development discusses the management of the cars in use, the "parc automobile", as a way to improve the living environment of the Province. In Nunavik, the latitude, geography, culture and diet of its inhabitant lead to the use of different types of motorized vehicles (skidoos, four-wheelers) to be known as contributing to the general pollution at a higher proportion. Policies are needed to assist the Region, including additional funding given the high cost of living, in attaining sustainable development while respecting its culture, traditional activities and identity. Example: Subsidies to purchase more expensive vehicle that would pollute less.

(ii) Standard of living:

Any aspect of a sustainable development plan must recognize the economic dimension of Nunavik. The region is characterized by a lower standard of living (reference to the recent statistics compiled on life expectancies in Nunavik that are below the standards in other parts of the country), high cost of living and limited choice in regard with employment. Consequently, policies on sustainable development plan should hinder economic development in the north.

4. *Comments on the Green Fund: corpus to be elaborated*

The creation of such a fund shall be fully supported, thus the actual absence of defined criteria and objectives raise interrogation on its efficiency and applicability. The principle is present, but not its mechanisms nor guidelines. Those important elements shall be elaborated as soon as possible, to send a strong message on the government intents.

Moreover, such Fund shall be seen as an additional source of funding and encouragement toward projects on sustainable development and shall not preclude accession to any other funds dedicated to the same purposes or goals (per instance, *the Fonds Environnement Hydro-Québec, Canadian funds, etc*).

5. *Suggestions for the elaboration of the Strategy: important elements for the Nunavik region.*

(i) Provisions on the follow-up of past and future development projects.

Once a development project has been authorized by government departments or agencies there is little or no support with the monitoring of the impacts of these projects. With the Raglan Nickel Mine Project for example, the few governmental mechanisms in place to monitor the impacts of this major development project have no direct relations with the communities impacted by such a project. If it wasn't for the Raglan Agreement signed between the Inuit and the company, which provides for committees between the parties, the communities would be left on their own, without guidance or support, in their relations with Falconbridge.

(ii) Provisions on decontamination and restoring non-active or abandoned mining sites.

Matter of real concern for Nunavik where several abandoned and contaminated mining sites (exploration and exploitation) are spread all over the territory and present a high risk for the biodiversity, the environment, the wildlife and the health and security of hunters.

Moreover, due to a lack of governmental policy, a recent inventory of abandoned mining exploration sites in Nunavik, has identified 595 sites. Of these, 190 have been visited and 18 have been classified as "major" i.e. contaminated with thousands of leaking old oil drums, batteries, acid and various pieces of equipment. A program to complete the characterization and the rehabilitation of these sites has to be set up in an urgent manner.

(iii) Focus on mining explorations activities

Mining exploration activities are not considered as development, thus the provisions of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement regarding development projects do not apply for such activities. Mining exploration activities however, can cause irreparable damages to the land and, when conducted without a proper ethic, more contaminated abandoned mining exploration sites are left behind by various companies. For years now, we have made representations at the national and international levels to develop a policy regarding exploration. Many efforts have been made to develop an ethic regarding mining exploration and exploitation. Unfortunately not all companies abide by such rules and it has become urgent that the entire regime regarding mining exploration be reviewed and adapted to the needs of a sustainable development of our region.

6 *Ecotourism: already an important political commitment for Nunavik*

Reference shall be made to the Sanarrutik Agreement signed between the Government of Québec, the Kativik Regional Government and Makivik in 2002. Provisions are therein dedicated to the development of ecotourism activities such as the creation of national parks in Nunavik and the advancement of the tourism industry. Makivik already puts in action its commitment towards ecotourism with the creation of the Cruise North Expeditions, a business project with a social and environmental conscience.

Also, in conjunction with the JBNQA and more specifically with its chapter 23, the development of ecotourism in Nunavik can only be achieved in a context of respect of the social and environmental dimensions of the region.

Makivik already committed itself towards the development of ecotourism in its Region, and it seems appropriate that the government reinforces that crucial element of sustainable development in the Act and Strategy and that tools be provided therein to execute that objective.

7 *Climate Change*

We have recently undertaken a study regarding the impacts of climate change on the use of the land by the Inuit hunters. Scientists are conducting studies on permafrost behavior in certain Inuit communities and agencies like Ouranos are doing their own studies. More studies are needed on ice conditions and the impacts that climate change may have on the wildlife of Nunavik.

For a sustainable development of Nunavik however, alternate energy production has to be part of a sustainable development policy. All electricity in the Region is being produced by burning millions of liters of diesel fuel each year. This contributes to the pollution of the immediate environment and to the emission of greenhouse gas. At this time, however, according to the Loi sur la Régie de l'Énergie (1998) only Hydro-Quebec can produce electricity in our Region. This Law impedes the development of alternate energy sources in Nunavik and it is imperative to amend such law.