



Inuit fear Muskrat Falls could poison food supply



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Excerpt from a Nunatsiavut government news conference where the group outlines concerns with the Muskrat Falls project 16:22

An aboriginal group in Labrador is concerned that the Muskrat Falls project could contaminate its food supply downstream.

Labrador Inuit said if the project goes ahead mercury levels in Lake Melville will likely go up, which could affect their main food sources of fish and seal.

Darryl Shiwak, the first minister of the Nunatsiavut government, said he's worried about the potential impact.

"There's a poison going into our water. It's going into the fish. It's going into the seals. And ultimately, it will go into us and our children. I don't know how else to say it. We're extremely concerned," he said.

Nunatsiavut President Sarah Leo said their research shows mercury levels are already high in Lake Melville. She said they discovered that mercury carried down the Churchill River is flowing into the lake.

Nunatsiavut experts said they believe if Muskrat Falls goes ahead, mercury levels in the lake will rise.

Leo said the Inuit are asking Nalcor and the provincial government to help pay for more environmental research.

"We have to recognize, and the province and Nalcor have to recognize, that Inuit health will be affected by this," she said.

Shiwak said Nalcor and the provincial government must take the group's concerns seriously.

"We simply cannot and will not be ignored any longer," he said.

Nalcor has previously said Muskrat Falls won't change the mercury content in the lake.

Kennedy open to talks

Natural Resources Minister Jerome Kennedy said he's willing to discuss this issue with the Nunatsiavut government, but he's not making any promises about what action the government might take.

Kennedy said they have heard extensively from the Inuit about their concerns. He rejected any notion that government has ignored the issue.

"I don't fully understand the comment that they feel like they have been ignored," he said.

"I think that we don't agree with them on everything. But being consulted and being respected and being ignored are different things. I don't think 'being ignored' is a good description."



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