

MEDIA RELEASE

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Independent Expert Advisory Committee (IEAC) Issues its First Set of Recommendations to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment

HAPPY VALLEY-GOOSE BAY, NL – Following a meeting on September 20, 2017, the Independent Expert Advisory Committee (IEAC) issued its first set of recommendations on the mitigation and monitoring of potential methylmercury impacts of the Lower Churchill Project to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, the Honourable Eddie Joyce.

The IEAC's recommendations come from the work of its subcommittee of independent scientists and Indigenous Knowledge experts. After analyzing relevant research and data, the IEAC made the following recommendations to Minister Joyce:

Recommendation #1: The IEAC recommends that a feasibility study be undertaken by December 20, 2017, for the removal of soil and vegetation from the future reservoir area.

The feasibility study will inform IEAC discussions about whether soil and further vegetation removal is determined to be an effective mitigation measure.

Recommendation #2: The IEAC recommends that Nalcor implement the changes described in the independent expert's report titled "Recommendations on changes to the scope and quality of the Muskrat Falls Aquatic Monitoring Program".

A detailed analysis of the current monitoring program was undertaken by the IEAC, and modifications were recommended that will enable the monitoring program to better detect any changes in methylmercury levels.

Recommendation #3: The IEAC recommends that Nalcor expedite the finalization of their current methylmercury modelling project, and complete the work no later than February 15, 2018.

The resulting model will include Lake Melville, and will be combined with Nalcor's human health risk assessment. The IEAC believes that it is important to review the results of this model, and compare the outcomes to other studies dealing with these issues.

The IEAC will continue to review existing research, and commission new studies to inform further recommendations about the potential methylmercury impacts of the Lower Churchill Project.

Backgrounder

The mission of the IEAC is to independently assess the adequacy of mitigation, monitoring and management of the Lower Churchill Project, and to provide recommendations to the Responsible Ministers with respect to the protection of the health of the Indigenous and local population impacted by the Lower Churchill Project, with particular focus on methylmercury in country foods in the Churchill River and downstream.

The IEAC's Oversight Committee is comprised of the Innu Nation, Nunatsiavut Government, NunatuKavut Community Council, the provincial and federal governments, Nalcor, and the Town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The establishment of the IEAC was a key agreement reached between the Provincial Government and the three Indigenous groups on October 26, 2016 to make recommendations on mitigating potential impacts of methylmercury from the Lower Churchill Project at Muskrat Falls, Labrador, NL. The IEAC is advised by an Independent Expert Committee made up of three Indigenous Knowledge and six scientific experts appointed by the members of the IEAC.

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