



☐ Box 186 Natuashish, NL A0P 1A0 T 709 478 8943 F 709 478 8833  
☐ Box 119 Sheshatshiu, NL A0P 1M0 T 709 497 8398 F 709 497 8396  
☐ Box 1106 Stn C, Goose Bay, NL A0P 1C0 T 709 896 3883 F 709 896 1180

March 30, 2021

Mr. Adrian Saenz  
Deputy Director  
Office of Public Engagement  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington DC 20500

**BY EMAIL:** [Adrian.Saenz@who.eop.gov](mailto:Adrian.Saenz@who.eop.gov)

Dear Deputy Director,

**RE: Presidential Permit for New England Clean Energy Connect**

We represent the Innu Nation and we are writing to express our legitimate concerns about the unethical nature of a Hydro-Québec hydroelectricity export project to the United States, with our hope that your Administration will intervene.

The project, known as the New England Clean Energy Connect (NECEC) project, involves the building of a 145-mile, 1,200 MW HVDC transmission line from the Quebec border to Lewiston, Maine, where it will connect to the existing New England electrical grid and be directed to Massachusetts. About one-sixth of the electricity being supplied by Hydro-Québec will be generated by the Churchill Falls Generating Station, which is located on Innu Nation territory in Labrador.

On April 13, 2020, the Innu Nation submitted official comments about the March 13, 2020, Draft Order issued by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (the “Department”) concerning the NECEC project. A copy of this document is appended to this letter.

In these comments, we explain our grievances against Hydro-Québec, which has never compensated us for the extensive damages caused to our traditional territory by the damming of the Churchill River to build the Churchill Falls Generating Station – damages that destroyed our hunting grounds, gathering places, livelihood, and way of life.

On October 6, 2020, we filed a \$4 billion claim against Hydro-Québec in the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador as compensation for the illegal taking of our land to build the Churchill Falls Generating Station and for the harm it caused to our people.

We also stated that the NECEC project should not be permitted unless the Department imposes a condition that states: "Prior to the start of construction, the applicant must submit to the Department documentation of permission to use Innu Territory that includes the signature of a duly authorized representative of the Innu Nation."

Despite the numerous environmental, economic and ethical objections raised against the NECEC project, the US Department of Energy (the "DOE") issued a Presidential Permit for the project on January 15, 2021, just one day after the DOE's Office of Electricity released its environmental assessment of the project. This left many stakeholder groups, including a coalition of Innu, Atikamekw and Anishnabeg First Nations from the province of Quebec, without the opportunity to have their concerns addressed and their questions answered.

Hydro-Québec and its sole owner, the Quebec government, have been violating the rights of First Nations for several decades. The United States should seriously reconsider whether it wants to source its energy from a company that pretends to offer green electricity while it reaps billions of dollars in profits at the expense of the First Nations whose lands it exploits.

With these concerns in mind, we are strongly urging the DOE to set aside the Presidential Permit issued for the NECEC project and to conduct a comprehensive impact study, including considerations identified in Sections 101 and 102(2)(F) of the National Environmental Policy Act. This would allow the DOE to acquire a more complete and balanced perspective about the violation of our rights by Hydro-Québec and the Quebec Government before it considers issuing a new Presidential Permit.

If you would like more information about our grievances against Hydro-Québec, we invite you to consult the appended document (official comments submitted by the Innu Nation to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection on April 13, 2020).

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this matter in further detail.

In the meantime, we sincerely thank you for your time and your consideration and look forward to your reply to our correspondence.

Nin,



Grand Chief Etienne Rich



Deputy Grand Chief Mary Ann Nui

CC: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P., Prime Minister of Canada  
Nancy Kleer, Partner, Olthuis Kleer Townshend LLP