



Assemblée des Premières Nations Québec-Labrador

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NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COVID-19 – THE AFNQL IS CONCERNED ABOUT RESUMING MINING OPERATIONS

Wendake, April 15, 2020 - The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) wants to highlight the decisions of First Nations leaders who have contributed, to date, to limiting the spread of COVID-19 within their communities. It must be noted that the instructions limiting access to these communities are producing encouraging results with a relatively stable positive case rate. "We would particularly like to acknowledge the collective effort of those on the front lines who ensure the maintenance of essential services. These people contribute to slowing down the spread of coronavirus among our populations," declared AFNQL Chief Ghislain Picard.

Furthermore, the AFNQL questions the Quebec Government's decision to authorize, as of today, the hasty resumption of mining activities, knowing that these are generally located on the traditional territories of several First Nations. "We judge that Quebec's decision to allow the resumption of mining operations in a hurry is dangerously compromising the efforts made by our communities to slow the spread of the disease in the regions. In this regard, the movement and comings and goings (*fly-in/fly-out*) of mining workers is of great concern. I would also like to reiterate that the pandemic does not exempt governments from their duty to consult", added the Chief of the AFNQL.

The AFNQL cannot stress enough the vulnerability of the communities. First Nations experts are unanimous on the fact that deconfinement will have to be extended over a longer period, for several reasons, including the lack of confinement sites. All also express great concern about how the message could be perceived by the population: resuming activities must not mean a loosening of preventive measures.

"In the face of COVID-19, our leaders prioritize the health and safety of our members above everything else, even the economy ", concluded the Chief of the AFNQL.

About the AFNQL

The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador is the regional political organization that brings together 43 First Nations Chiefs in Quebec and Labrador. Follow the AFNQL on Twitter @APNQL.

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