



Assemblée des Premières Nations Québec-Labrador

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BILL 61: AN IMPASS THAT PRESENTS AN OPPORTUNITY

Wendake, June 12, 2020 - Faced with the deadlock on the adoption of the principle of Bill 61, the elected members of the National Assembly, including the current government, have before them an opportunity to correct a major error that excludes the fundamental rights of First Nations. The Legault Government has agreed to certain amendments, thereby backing down on some of the powers it initially gave itself. Although everyone, from the environment groups to the municipalities, seems to have made some gains with some amendments, so far none of these call for the respect of Aboriginal and Treaty Rights of First Nations and the obligations they entail.

“First Nations will never accept legislation that ignores the Crown's duty to consult and does not recognize constitutionally entrenched Aboriginal and Treaty Rights as a basis. If the government remains focused on the speedy adoption of a bill that ignores our repeated calls for respect and denies our most fundamental rights, it must prepare for an uncertain tomorrow,” said AFNQL Chief Ghislain Picard.

Moreover, the approach adopted in this bill is not only incompatible with the Nation-to-Nation relationship that Quebec has committed to building, as it is in direct contradiction with the spirit of a motion of the National Assembly, adopted unanimously on October 8, recognizing the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

“The history of our relationship with governments is one of repeated compromises when not simply being cheated. To this day, governments maintain an attitude of arrogance when it comes to their obligations towards our peoples. We stop counting the numerous court decisions on the duty to consult and calling for the respect of the constitutional provisions on Aboriginal and Treaty Rights. At a minimum, Bill 61 should have amendments to that effect. Once again, First Nations will have no choice but to consider possible remedies to ensure respect. Indifference and contempt come at a price, the Premier would be wrong to minimize it,” concluded Chief Picard.

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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