

**Assemblée des Premières Nations  
Québec-Labrador**

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**PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION**

**ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND FIRST NATIONS: THE AFNQL CALLS FOR  
CAUTION**

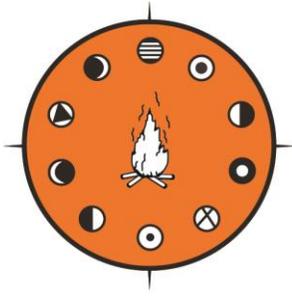
*Wendake, June 5, 2020* - The surge of government announcements grouped together in the form of an omnibus bill (*An Act to stimulate the economy of Quebec and mitigate the consequences of the state of health emergency declared on March 13, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic*) tabled earlier this week by the CAQ government raises profound questions about the intention behind the construction of schools and homes for seniors. Nevertheless, these numerous projects, although they may be legitimate, cannot be the scene of the largesse that the Quebec government wants to provide itself with in terms of legislation in order to expedite its duty to consult First Nations and to reduce the application of already low environmental standards to a minimum.

"Now that it has tasted the authority of the Emergency Measures Order extended indefinitely due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the government cannot arrogate to itself both the right to revive its economy and the right to roll back progress on environmental protection. It cannot take advantage of the current context to put the health of our populations on the back burner, nor can it more openly infringe First Nations' Aboriginal and treaty rights," said AFNQL Chief Ghislain Picard.

"Now that it has tasted the authority of the Emergency Measures Order extended indefinitely due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the government cannot arrogate to itself both the right to revive its economy and the right to roll back progress on environmental protection. It cannot take advantage of the current context to put the health of our populations on the back burner, nor can it more openly flout First Nations' Aboriginal and treaty rights," said AFNQL Chief Ghislain Picard.

A few days before the tabling of Bill 61, Premier Legault guaranteed, through a targeted message to First Nations and Inuit, which obviously did not resonate with the major networks, his government's willingness to involve First Nations in the economic recovery. There is an opportunity here for the provincial government to put its words into action and listen to First Nations who are looking for a balance between their own economic recovery and the protection of their territories.

"History teaches us that too often a guarantee often hides many exclusions. We have a responsibility to be constantly vigilant of the slightest gestures of governments that preach reconciliation and partnership on the one hand, while on the other, act in contradiction to their so-called willingness to establish a true relationship with our Nations. In any case, as we have decades of experience of being excluded from the decisions that affect our communities, we will continue



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to do what it takes to ensure that our governments have a voice when it comes to the development of our non-ceded territories and resources," 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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Sources :

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