



MINUTES OF THE 226th MEETING OF THE JAMES BAY ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE

November 30, 2022

LOCATION

Cree Nation Government, Montreal

PRESENT

Melissa Saganash, Cree Nation Government
Marc Dunn, Cree Nation Government
Vanessa Chalifour, Québec (remote)
Brigitte Goulet, Québec
Mélanie Savoie, Québec (remote)
Manon Cyr, Québec(remote)

Alexandre-Guy Côté, Canada
Elisabeth Gill, Canada

Michèle Leduc-Lapierre, Executive Director
Graeme Morin, Environmental Analyst
Eva Wolf, Secretariat Officer

ABSENT

Madeleine Green, Canada

GUESTS

Catherine Choquette, Université de Sherbrooke (for item 6)
Charles Gauthier, Université de Sherbrooke (for item 6)
Nadine Roy, Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des
Parcs (MELCCFP) (for item 8)
Edith Bourque, MELCCFP (for item 8)
Michèle Tremblay, MELCCFP (for item 8)
Julie Veillette, MELCCFP (for item 8)
Sophie Cooper, MELCCFP (for item 8)
Tina Petawabano, Cree Nation Government (for item 10)
Alexandra Valentin, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (for item 10)

WELCOME AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The Chairperson welcomes the members.

On a motion by Melissa Saganash, seconded by Brigitte Goulet, the agenda (see appendix 1) is adopted with modification (switching items 10 and 11).

ADMINISTRATION

Adoption of the minutes of the 225th meeting

On a motion by Vanessa Chalifour, seconded by Marc Dunn, the minutes of the 225th meeting are adopted.

Follow-up on actions from the 225th meeting

The Executive Director follows up on the actions from the 225th meeting. She confirms that the next meeting in the Territory will be held in Mistissini from June 13 to 15, 2023.

Regarding the caribou file, a meeting will be organized in 2023. The Chairperson suggests not waiting for the file to develop before setting a meeting date. It would be ideal to have the provincial and federal governments present. The Analyst points out that the Cree Nation Government should also be present. The Executive Director

proposes to hold a half-day meeting on the caribou issue on the same day as a half-day meeting on climate change in conjunction with the March 22, 2023 meeting. She will send out a Doodle to set the date.

Follow-up on hiring a part-time Analyst

The Executive Director informs the members that a few candidates had been selected and that two interviews were scheduled for the following Friday. She will inform members of the follow-up to these meetings.

BUDGET

The Executive Director informs the members that the person responsible for the northern committees at the MELCCFP needed the budget estimate earlier this year. The Administrative Committee prepared an estimate which was sent out at the end of October. The Executive Director stresses that she had mentioned that this was an estimate and that the official budget would be adopted at the November 30, 2022 meeting.

The Executive Director describes the different budget items and the associated projected amounts for the current and next year. She points out that the deficit for the current year will be covered by the surpluses accumulated in previous years due to the pandemic.

For the year 2023-2024, the requested amount will be higher mainly due to the hiring of a part-time analyst and inflation. The Executive Director mentions that this is the first request for a substantial increase in ten years and that she has prepared an explanatory document for the MELCCFP.

The Chairperson points out that if there was a refusal of the increase, it will have to be brought to the next meeting with the Administrators. The Executive Director will add this point to the discussion topics for the meeting.

On a motion by Elisabeth Gill, seconded by Marc Dunn, the revised provisional budget for 2022-2023 and the provisional budget for 2023-2024 are adopted.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Presentation of the draft and work of the subcommittee

The Executive Director presents a summary of the work done in developing the next strategic plan. Following the workshop held in Waskaganish, two elements related to the 2018-2023 strategic plan emerged, namely that the plan was ambitious and that there were no indicators. These will be elements to consider in the new plan. At the workshop, members adopted the vision statement, but the mission statement needed to be reworked before adoption. Members decided that values would not appear in a separate section of the plan, but would be included in the text. The most important values to be highlighted would be collaboration and collegiality. Finally, the Executive Director presents a summary of the strengths and weaknesses that had been identified during the workshop.

Following the September workshop, a subcommittee was created and met three times. During these meetings, the first draft of the strategic plan was developed. The Executive Director presents a table showing the areas of intervention, objectives, indicators and targets, noting that two areas of intervention had been identified, each with four objectives

The Executive Director then proposes a schedule for further work. The final version of the text should be adopted at the March 2023 meeting. The document will then go to graphic design with the aim of having a final version ready for the June 2023 meeting.

Following the presentation, the Executive Director invites the members to continue the discussion on the content of the long version of the mission statement. Members discuss the wording and agree on a final version.

On a motion by Melissa Saganash, seconded by Mélanie Savoie, the mission statement is adopted.

Discussion on areas of intervention, objectives, indicators and targets

The Executive Director presents the different objectives. For each, she explains the context, summarizes the discussions held in the sub-committee, and describes the indicator and targets. The members discuss and raise points that would need to be modified in the new version. They suggest merging some of the objectives to avoid redundancy.

The Executive Director then invites members to send her additional comments by email by December 16, 2022. She will make changes based on the discussions at the meeting and the written comments. The subcommittee will meet over the winter and then propose a new draft.

MEETING WITH CATHERINE CHOQUETTE – LEGISLATIVE PORTRAIT

The Chairperson introduces Catherine Choquette and Charles Gauthier, from the Université de Sherbrooke, who were commissioned to prepare a legislative and regulatory portrait of the environmental and social protection regime of Section 22 of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement. The purpose of this work is to better understand the legislative and regulatory framework in order to meet the needs of the JBACE in carrying out its mandate and to popularize the elements of the protection regime in the complex context of the JBNQA.

Mr. Gauthier explains that he is drafting a report that describes the competences and the local delegation of powers, the impacts of the agreements and treaties on the territory resulting in a portrait of the laws and regulations likely to apply on the territory. The delivery of the report is planned for February 3, 2023 and will be in two parts: the portrait and the inventory of laws and regulations in appendix. He adds that adjustments and clarifications could be made according to the members' comments. Mr. Gauthier then presents an overview of the main elements studied to date, namely the division of powers, the local delegation of powers, the impacts of agreements and treaties, and an overview of the laws and regulations. He goes on to describe the tasks that remain to be done, including the sorting out of the elements of the legislation and the presence of adaptations and exceptions with respect to the Territory or the Crees. He concludes by explaining that there will be the possibility of presenting the information in other formats depending on the target audience (infographics and diagrams, explanatory capsules and videos, pamphlets, etc.).

Ms. Choquette concludes by stating that if there are no specific requests, the analysis will remain at the provincial and federal levels, but there will be a way to dig deeper at the MRC and regional levels on specific points established. Tables summarizing the analysis information in the report will also be included.

The Chairperson supports the approach of sorting out the laws and regulations as accurately as possible and that if this takes more time, the CCEBJ could adapt the contract accordingly.

Ms. Choquette confirms that the presentation will be sent to the Executive Director who will share it with the members.

MEETING WITH THE DIRECTION DE L'EAU POTABLE ET DES EAUX SOUTERRAINES (DEPES) - MELCCFP

The Chairperson welcomes and introduces the guests.

After a roundtable of introductions, the Chairperson mentions that this meeting followed the meeting with the Provincial Administrator, Mr. Marc Croteau, at the March 17, 2022, JBACE meeting. The latter suggested the JBACE to meet with representatives of the DEPES in order to learn about the groundwater project underway and the mapping near the communities. The objective of this meeting is to find out what initiatives are underway on the territory that could be of interest to the JBACE and how the JBACE could be useful to the department.

Ms. Bourque presents the project, which consists of a portrait of groundwater resources. The objectives are, on the one hand, to provide essential knowledge for sound land management in southern Quebec and in the Cree territory, and on the other hand, to minimize the potential cumulative impacts on the quantity and quality of groundwater resources resulting from anthropogenic activities and climate change. The project team is

composed of UQAT in collaboration with the Cree Nations of Eastmain and Chisasibi, and the Cree Nation Government.

Ms. Bourque continues by presenting the issues for the Cree Nation: surface water resources are impacted by hydroelectric developments (dams, river diversions, etc.), there is an increase in the communities' dependence on groundwater, salt water intrusion in the coastal environment has been identified, and the exploitation of natural resources is likely to increase. The mid-north may also be highly sensitive to climate change. Ongoing projects should assess the aquifer properties of the different geological units, their relationship with surface water bodies and wetlands, and the impacts of hydroelectric development.

The members discuss the availability of surface water analyses and the possibility of making future predictions about water quality. Ms. Bourque responds that Hydro-Québec has conducted investigations on water quality and suggested that UQAT be contacted to access these analyses. Ms. Bourque states that the creation of a hydrogeological atlas in the Cree language and in English is part of the knowledge transfer objectives in order to make the UQUAT recommendations accessible. With respect to prognoses, Ms. Bourque says that it is not yet possible to extrapolate results to the northern territories or to know the impacts on the issue of climate change. Groundwater mapping will help identify fragile areas and better understand water dynamics.

The members inquire about the possibility of having a presentation by the UQAT researcher for this project, Mr. Eric Rosa. The Executive Director will follow up.

LAKE STURGEON MANAGEMENT PLAN

The guests and members introduce themselves. Marc Dunn – who works on the project – then explains that the sturgeon is a species reserved for the Crees under Section 24 of the JBNQA. This is the first time a reserved species has gone through in a process of legal agreement and management plan development. The Cree Nation Government plays a key role in the development of this management plan.

He explains that the process began in 2019 with the designation of lake sturgeon as a species of special concern for the southern Hudson Bay and James Bay population. This designation legally implies the development of a management plan that will be prepared by DFO in collaboration with the provinces and First Nations. As the process began, representatives from Canada, Quebec and the Cree Nation Government met a few times to determine the best collaborative approach to preparing a management plan. It was then in June 2020 that the Cree Nation Government sent a letter to DFO requesting a formal agreement outlining the collaboration before proceeding with the preparation of the management plan.

He continues by explaining that the regional MFFP's for Nord-du-Québec has been identified as a key collaborator in the process of developing a management plan. The role of the new ministry (MELCCFP) in this process has yet to be defined. A letter to the regional Director to formalize the request for participation was sent on July 4, 2022. Involvement of the JBACE in the development of the management plan will be welcomed, but later in the process. Engagement with collaborators – including the JBACE – is expected to start in February 2023 and finalization of the management plan is planned for 2024.

FILES

Cumulative effects

The Analyst presents the latest updates on the file. A first draft of the first strategy (data) is finalized and a meeting with the subcommittee will be organized shortly.

This file will be a priority and the Analyst is working on the drafting of strategies to guide future work of the subcommittee regarding:

Data

- Strategy that includes encouraging governments to collaborate and adopt open data policies and facilitate access to data.
- Strategy that includes the creation of a database. REMINDER: we are in 'exploration' mode for this component.

Directives

- Strategy that includes an exploration of options/opportunities to identify guidance that can support cumulative effects assessments (e.g., improving knowledge of project areas, selection of valued components, identification of project areas). REMINDER: we had already agreed to keep the issue of guidance as a medium-term effort

Regional planning and regional policy

- Strategies that will include the development of a “lessons learned” document.
- Strategies that also include an exploration of the CNG initiative on the development of a regional portrait and a potential spin-off initiative oriented towards decision making / support capacity.

The Analyst will share the draft of the first strategy (data) with the subcommittee.

Other files

Time did not allow to address the other items on the agenda. The Analyst mentions that a summary is available on request.

ADJOURN

On a motion by Brigitte Goulet, seconded by Melissa Saganash, the meeting is adjourned.

Prepared by Eva Wolf, Secretariat Officer and Michèle Leduc-Lapierre, Executive Director

Reviewed by Graeme Morin, Environmental Analyst

Adopted on March 22, 2023

