



Press Release

For Immediate Release

Quebec, August 26 2010 -The Innu TakuaiKAN Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam (ITUM) have submitted recommendations on Quebec's Mineral Strategy to the National Assembly. The submission was made as part of the process for revising the Mining Act through Bill 79, currently being examined by a parliamentary committee. After a thorough review of the proposed amendments to the Mining Act, and faced with the unwillingness of Quebec to recognize fundamental Aboriginal rights, ITUM has concluded that there is a massive gap between the position of the Uashaunnuat and the government regarding the legal title of mineral resources.

ITUM does not accept the underlying premise of the Mining Act and Bill 79, that Quebec is the owner of mineral resources found in the traditional territory of the Innu, and that Quebec has the ultimate responsibility to manage these resources. The Uashaunnuat maintain that, to the contrary, they are the true owners of the mineral resources. "The Uashaunnuat, and in particular the Uashaunnuat families have the authority and the responsibility to manage, preserve, and protect their traditional lands and natural resources, including minerals" explains Jonathan McKenzie, the Councillor in charge of the mining portfolio for ITUM.

All mining developments on the traditional territory of the Uashaunnuat require the consent of the Nation and of the particular families affected by a project. "We don't accept that a simple public consultation is sufficient. So, our position must be to oppose any and all projects that have not received the explicit authorization of the Uashaunnuat and the affected families" added Mr. McKenzie.

The ITUM also rejects the premise that the mineral resources found on their traditional territories are in the public domain and that the Mining Act can even be applied to them.

Instead of making minor changes to the status quo, ITUM recommends that Quebec take immediate, concrete steps to recognize and respect Uashaunnuat law on their traditional territory and for their mineral resources. In other words, no policy or supposed authorization from Quebec regarding exploitation of mineral resources in traditional Innu territory should be given without the consent of the Uashaunnuat and families.

Inspired by the the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Quebec is committed to supporting, ITUM must reiterate that the Innu have the right to define and establish priorities and strategies for the development of the lands and resources of their territory.

For ITUM it is clear that a comprehensive land claim agreement between the Uashaunnuat, Canada, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador is the best means of reconciling the profound differences between the parties. Unfortunately, Quebec has not shown serious interest in reaching an agreement. Meanwhile, the mineral resources remain underground within Uashaunnuat's authority, and not with Quebec.

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