C A N A D A

PROVINCE OF QUÉBEC
DISTRICT OF MONTRÉAL

FILE No. R-4127-2020
PHASE 1 – Integrated Network

RÉGIE DE L'ÉNERGIE

HYDRO-QUÉBEC DISTRIBUTION (HQD) - GREENHOUSE PRODUCTION DEVELOPMENT TARIFF

HYDRO-QUÉBEC
In its quality of Distributor

Petitionner

-and-

LE REGROUPEMENT CREE POUR L'AUTONOMIE ALIMENTAIRE (« CREE »)
consisting of
The Cree First Nation of Waswanipi and Société de développement d'entreprise Whapmagoostui Eeyou inc. (SDEWE), a Corporation entirely owned by the Cree First Nation of Whapmagoostui

Intervenor

OPENING STATEMENT

Mr. Matthew Mukash
Mr. Sam Gull
for
LE REGROUPEMENT CREE POUR L'AUTONOMIE ALIMENTAIRE (« CREE »)
THE CREE GROUP FOR FOOD AUTONOMY
consisting of
The Cree First Nation of Waswanipi
Société de développement d'entreprise Whapmagoostui Eeyou inc. (SDEWE)

November 3, 2020

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Mr. Mukash:

ENGLISH TRANSLATION FROM CREE :

It is a great pleasure for me to speak before the Energy Board on behalf of the Economic Development corporation of Whapmagoostui (of which I am the President). This corporation is a society entirely owned by the Cree First Nation of Whapmagoostui.

We greet the Energy Board as well Hydro-Quebec and all other participants who are taking part in this hearing. The last time I was here, in person, to testify on the supply plan of Hydro-Québec Distribution, the Energy Board issued an important decision for the development of renewable energy in the great north of Quebec, including Whapmagoostui. It is our hope that, this time, the Energy Board will take our suggestions into consideration.

When we visit a new location, it is customary for us to also greet the First Nation where this location is situated. But in this case, since this hearing is held on the Internet, with participants coming from many different places in Quebec and in Ontario, as well as having other listeners to this call that may come from even further locations, my greetings are extended to all 55 Native communities which are part of the First Nations of Quebec and some even in Ontario, all of them including the Cree, the Inuit, the Algonquin, the Mohawk, the Attikamekw-Nehirowisiw, the Huron-Wendat, the Innu, the Abenaki, the Malecite, the Naskapi and the Mi'kmaq Nations.

IN ENGLISH:

As I said in the Cree language, I speak today before the Energy Board on behalf of the Economic development corporation of the Whapmagoostui Cree First Nation. As you know, being an off-grid community, we have serious food security issues that sadly have been accentuated by the pandemic. Access to fresh vegetable and fruit is now even more difficult and, even though our community is off grid, the decisions that are made, south of our community on the Integrated Network, on local food production, will deeply affect our capacity to obtain fresh fruit and vegetables at an acceptable cost to our people. I will leave Mr. Sam W. Gull, that is representing the Waswanipi Cree First Nation, to complete this opening statement.

Mr. Gull:

Meegwetch, Mr. Mukash. The Cree First Nation of Waswanipi is located in the James Bay Territory, Eeyou/Ennou Istche. As you know, a large quantity of hydroelectricity is being produced and is used by all Quebecer's as well as partly exported to surrounding Canadian provinces and parts of the United States. Waswanipi is part of the Integrated Grid of Hydro-Quebec. It is located one hour from Chapais in the Saguenay region and is also close to the Abitibi region, where a majority of the hydro lines pass to the South.

The electricity produced in all the Cree territories benefits many people both in Canada and the United States. Even after the James Bay Agreement and the "Paix des Braves" supplement agreement, the Cree Nations are still struggling economically and socially. They are still far away from reaching the same quality of life, which is enjoyed in more southern regions. Food security is one of these struggles.

So, even though Waswanipi is part of the integrated network of HQD and is close to the Saguenay and Abitibi regions, we still are paying over 40 % more for our food than the other Quebecers. And the difference is even much higher in Whapmagoostui.

Not having access to fresh vegetables and fruits also results in a catastrophic health situation. For example, we have a diabetes rate that is four-time higher than Quebec overall, with an average of 27% for Waswanipi vs 6% for the other Quebecer's.

It is affecting each of our family members directly. I want to give you the example of my brother, a former Chief of Waswanipi, who is currently in the ICU in Montreal General Hospital as a consequence of his serious diabetes complication. Consequently, we are glad to see that Hydro-Quebec has agreed to promote a tariff to support greenhouse development that is missing so much in our Communities. But we are still very concerned by some of Hydro-Quebec's recommendations that will be further described by M. Schiettekatte and Mr. Gradek.

I want to highlight three of our essential points of concerns:

a) Even though the Greenhouse Tariff aims to help to attain food safety, Hydro-Quebec suggests offering it indistinctively to all greenhouses, even those used for plants (including marijuana) and flowers, and there is risk, a concern that all of these non-food uses could become the primary beneficiaries of the new Tariff. **The public would not accept that for long, especially if other consumers have to pay for that.** Therefore, this could jeopardize the long-term survival of this Tariff for those greenhouses, like the ones of the Cree Nations, that would use the Tariff for fruits and vegetables.

b) On the other hand, Hydro-Quebec suggests limiting the Tariff only to heating and photosynthesis, and not to offer it to all the different electrical types of equipment found in a modern greenhouse. This limitation would make the Tariff less useful to greenhouses and will not be an efficient way to increase local food production.

c) Finally, we note that Hydro-Quebec's proposal would not yet apply to off-grid communities, even though several of them do have greenhouse projects and have even more significant food security issues. We hope that the Energy Board will correct this omission in a future second Phase of this file.

I want to conclude that Waswanipi just secured some funding from the Plan Nord to undertake in the beginning of 2021 the detailed design of a future greenhouse. We hope that the Energy Board will rule soon on this electric Tariff so that this future greenhouse of Waswanipi can benefit from it and will not be forced to rely more heavily on fossil fuels, and so that our food suppliers in the South may also benefit from it.

We also hope the Tariff will be ready in time in Phase 2 of this case to benefit off-grid communities so that the future Whapmagoostui greenhouse may also benefit from it. We wish the same for all future greenhouse projects presently being examined in Northern communities.