

## 2017-2018 Action Plan

### **For Better Integration of Climate Change and Demystifying the Environmental and Social Impact Review Procedure**

In the last three years, COMEX has taken numerous actions to enhance implementation of the environmental and social impact assessment regime in the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Territory. Concrete steps were taken to ensure transparency of the general review process and, more recently, to foster more informed participation by populations affected by projects.

This year, COMEX is launching two initiatives to ensure better integration of climate change into the environmental and social impact review procedure for the Territory and to demystify the environmental and social impact review procedure.

With regard to climate change, like all regions of the world, James Bay is currently seeing the impacts of climate change in various forms and varying degrees of intensity, which are threatening the lives and environment of the region's inhabitants as well as compromising development projects. It goes without saying that development projects in the Territory can generate additional impacts with both local and global consequences for climate change effects.

Despite the fact that the concern was raised during environmental and social impact assessment and review of projects in the Territory, COMEX notes the absence of a systematic approach based on sufficient knowledge and grounded in measurable scientific methods as well as the knowledge and observations of land users. In addition, following the reform of the *Environment Quality Act*, the Québec government intends to take its own action to fight climate change by introducing new regulations as well as a climate test for every new project submitted to environmental assessment. However, the new regulations will apply to southern Québec only.

The members also decided to tackle the climate change issue by calling on experts to help develop an approach for systematically integrating climate change considerations into the environmental and social impact review of projects in the Territory.

The initiative to demystify the environmental and social impact review procedure grew out of numerous discussions on various issues identified over time as well as meetings held with stakeholders in the context of the 2016-2017 Action Plan. Issues related to, in particular, the timeframe associated with each step in the environmental and social impact assessment and review procedure under the northern regime and with bringing contributors to COMEX reviews up to speed, got members interested in shedding light on aspects of the environmental and social impact assessment and review procedure.

The majority of actions defined in the 2016-2017 Action Plan were implemented, including, in particular, the publication of a document outlining COMEX's expectations with respect to proponents' consultations. Some of the actions under the previous plan will continue, while others will be renewed as part of the 2017-2018 Action Plan.

COMEX's 2017-2018 Action Plan includes the following actions to implement the two targeted initiatives:

**1) Ensure better integration of climate change into the review process**

- Action 1.1:** Initiate an exploratory meeting between COMEX, COMEV, the JBACE and experts from the MDDELCC and Ouranos for the purpose of determining the steps in ensuring better integration of climate change into the environmental and social impact review of projects in the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Territory.
- Action 1.2:** In collaboration with the MDDELCC and COMEV, develop and adopt a systematic approach for considering climate change issues in the environmental and social impact review of projects in the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Territory.
- Action 1.3:** Communicate, to all stakeholders, the measures to ensure better integration of climate change into the environmental and social impact review of projects in the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Territory.

## 2) Demystify the environmental and social impact review procedure

- Action 2.1:** Render an account of the timeframes for reviews over a period to be determined and, based on the results, identify and implement possible solutions that will make the overall review process more effective.
- Action 2.2:** **Action initiated in 2016:** Identify outside communication channels that reach a large audience, including stakeholders, to spread news or important information about project reviews.
- Action 2.3:** **Action initiated in 2016:** Hold at least three COMEX meetings in the Cree territory each year, and initiate meetings with local interveners.
- Action 2.4:** **Action initiated in 2016:** Place advertising about COMEX in *The Nation* and *Le Jamésien*.

## 3) Other actions provided for in the 2016-2017 Action Plan renewed and continued in 2017-2018

- Action 3.1:** Continue working with the JBACE on its plan to prepare a framework document for proponents.
- Action 3.2:** Initiate meetings with the various bodies and committees created under Section 22 of the JBNQA and related agreements with the goal of developing a better understanding of the roles and mandates of all levels involved in the review process.
- Action 3.3:** With the JBACE and during sectoral meetings, raise the issue and consequences related to Cree terminology used during consultations, where the interpretation sometimes muddles the original meaning. Identify ways to develop or refine Cree terms used in the review process.
- Action 3.4:** Develop a protocol for the translation of COMEX documents.