

June 9, 2022

Mr. Benoit Charette
Minister of the Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques
Government of Quebec
ministre@environnement.gouv.qc.ca

Dear Minister,

As you know, on July 15, 2021, my predecessor, the Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, decided further to a request of the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke, that a regional assessment of the St. Lawrence River would be conducted under the *Impact Assessment Act* (the Act).

When such an assessment is indicated and will be conducted in a region located entirely or partially outside federal lands, section 93 of the Act allows me, in my capacity as Minister of Environment, to enter into an agreement or arrangement with any jurisdiction, such as the Government of Quebec, respecting the joint establishment of a committee to conduct the assessment and the manner in which the assessment is to be conducted.

Also, by this letter, I inform you of our intention to enter into an agreement or arrangement with the Government of Quebec respecting the joint establishment of a committee that will be mandated to conduct the regional assessment of the St. Lawrence River.

In this regard, since fall 2021, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) has worked in collaboration and consultation with representatives of the Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques (MELCC), various Indigenous peoples of Canada and other parties interested in planning a regional assessment.

During its exchanges with the Agency, the MELCC reiterated that, for the past several decades, the St. Lawrence Action Plan (PASL) has served as a framework agreement for the cooperation of the Governments of Canada and Quebec in their concerted efforts for conservation, protection, restoration and enhancement of the St. Lawrence. Also, it is completely appropriate to use the PASL in order to align our governments' actions during the regional assessment while ensuring compliance with the Act.

Together, our teams will need to develop a draft agreement or arrangement consistent with the structure and governance provided by the PASL, including the following items:

- the terms of reference of the joint committee, its composition, the selection process of its members and any other aspect related to its governance;
- the manner in which the regional assessment is to be conducted, its objectives and the expected outcomes.

To achieve this approach, I understand that our teams are currently working on the development of a joint project sheet for the regional assessment, which will be submitted to the Issue Committee on "Sustainable Use" of the PASL.

Finally, I would like to remind you that cooperation between my government and the First Nations of Canada is paramount. Here, this cooperation must translate into participation by the First Nations according to their interests, including the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke, at all stage of the process:

from the drafting of the terms of reference, including the selection of the committee's members, to the manner in which the regional assessment is to be conducted. Also, I expect that the draft agreement or arrangement and the terms of reference of the committee reflect the contribution of the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke.

I am pleased with our cooperation and to see that our teams are already at work so that this regional assessment proceeds as soon as possible.

Please accept my best regards.

The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.N.A. (il/lui/he/him)