

Rapport 250 - Projet de mine de fer du lac Bloom

Lac Bloom iron mine project

Conclusion

In light of its analysis, the Commission takes note of the effort made by the proponent to reduce the impact of its project on the natural environment, in particular by reducing the facilities' encroachment on the hydric environment. Moreover, with a process water re-utilization rate of close to 98%, the quality of the project is comparable to good practices in the mining field. Given the project's residual impact in terms of the allocation of public lands, it would be relevant that the Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune examine the advisability of compensating for the loss of terrestrial environment associated with the project.

The current context of the international iron ore market, which is cyclical in nature, is favourable to carrying out the project over the short term. The project would have a core-building effect, both at the local and regional levels, by the scope of the investments required and by its stimulating effects on the products and services sector as well as on job creation.

The Innu Takuaikan Uashat mak Mani-Utenam Council has not come out in support of the project and is not entirely in agreement with the fact that the Government of Québec is consulting the Council via the BAPE. While stating that it is open to discussions with the proponent, the Council renounced an agreement-in-principle signed by the previous council and the proponent, which was supposed to provide a framework for negotiations to maximize the socio-economic spin-offs for the Innu communities concerned. While refraining from expressing an opinion on the merits of the project, the spokesperson for the Naskapi nation would like this project to serve as an example in the environmental assessment field for other mining projects to come in the region and would like to see his community benefit from the economic spin-offs.

The carrying out of the project would lead to an increase in the population of the Town of Fermont of up to 20%. Moreover, regardless of whether or not the project is carried out, the town's water supply and wastewater treatment infrastructures would have to be updated.

The town's residential sector is dependent for the most part on the Québec Cartier mining company, which owns more than 90% of the housing units. Given the marked increase in housing needs arising from the carrying out

of the project, access to housing represents a major stake. The proponent should plan for measures that would encourage its workers to put down roots in the community. For this purpose, it would be essential that the company invest in the town's residential sector to encourage those workers wishing to settle there to do so.

Beyond the considerations of solidarity and equity underlying such obligations on the part of the proponent, the socio-community development and the long-term existence of the Town of Fermont are in the public interest and call on other players. Consequently, the State has a major role to play at this level, notably by way of the Société d'habitation du Québec and other competent organizations in this field. In conjunction with the Town of Fermont, these organizations should begin an initiative seeking to permit the emergence of a housing sector that is independent of industrial employers, one which takes into account the town's remoteness and single-industry character.