QUÉBEC’S LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN CONNECTION WITH THE ST. LAWRENCE AND GREAT LAKES

Speaking Notes for a Great Lakes Legislative Caucus Webinar

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Introduction

Hello,

My name is Guy Ouellette, and I am the Québec National Assembly Member for Chomedey, a riding located in Laval, north of Montréal.

I am pleased to join you today to outline the main legislative and political developments related to environmental protection and drinking water in Québec since September 2015.

Canada-Quebec Accord for the joint management of petroleum resources in the Gulf of St. Lawrence

- On June 11, 2015, Bill 49, An Act to implement the accord between the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec for the joint management of petroleum resources in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, was introduced in the National Assembly. Mirror legislation was introduced in the House of Commons one week later.

- The federal bill, Bill C-74, died on the Order Paper last fall when the Canadian Parliament was dissolved to hold federal elections. A new government came to power. Since then, no new bill has been introduced in the House of Commons.

- The National Assembly’s Bill 49 has not moved forward yet.

- The Accord was signed on March 24, 2011. It establishes a transitional phase for the management of petroleum resources aimed at regulating oil and gas activities in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.
Maritime Strategy

- The Québec government released its Maritime Strategy in June 2015. Public and private investments of approximately $9 billion are expected by 2030.

- The Maritime Strategy seeks to develop the potential of the St. Lawrence River and its estuary in the context of growing international trade.

- On March 3, the Government announced an investment of $300 million to implement industrial port zones. These zones will mean easier access to North American and international markets for the companies that set up operations there.

Drilling and construction of an oil port in Cacouna

- In November 2015, the company TransCanada announced that it had shelved its plans to build an oil port in Québec for its Energy East pipeline project. In April 2015, it had announced that it was abandoning its project to build an oil port in the St. Lawrence estuary at Cacouna, due to the presence of a beluga nursery in this sector.

- More recently, in February, TransCanada also abandoned its project to set up a pumping station at Saint-Honoré-de-Témiscouata. The station was no longer needed because the Cacouna oil port project had been cancelled.

Energy East pipeline project

- TransCanada continues to pursue its Energy East pipeline project. If it gets approval from the National Energy Board, the federal authority with jurisdiction in these matters, the pipeline will run through seven provinces, from Alberta to New Brunswick.

- In June 2015, the Québec government mandated the BAPE, its environmental review board, to study the issues related to the pipeline’s route through Québec. Last February, the BAPE announced that its report would include an assessment
of the GHG emissions resulting from the production of the oil carried by the pipeline.

- The first round of consultations on the Energy East pipeline project began in March 2016. These hearings were devoted to studying the issues that fall within its mandate, including an oil spill’s potential impacts on drinking water supply and other possible oil spill scenarios. The second round of consultations has been suspended for the moment.

- In March, the Québec government applied for an injunction to force TransCanada to comply with Québec’s Environment Quality Act and file a project notice for the Energy East pipeline. Later in March, the Superior Court rejected a request from TransCanada to stop legal action taken by environmental groups to ensure the project’s compliance with Québec regulations. The Court also ordered that the legal proceedings instituted by environmental groups be merged with those of the Québec government to force TransCanada to comply with Québec’s Environmental Quality Act.

- Last week, on April 22nd, TransCanada has accepted to comply with Québec’s Environment Quality Act and will submit an Environmental Impact Assessment by June 6th 2016.

**Lake Michigan water diversion**

- Representatives of municipalities in Québec and Ontario and environmental groups are sceptical about the need for the municipality of Waukesha’s water diversion project. They fear it would set a dangerous precedent and open the door to similar requests.

- Québec’s Environment Minister has said he will wait until the application assessment has been completed before commenting.

Thank you for your attention!