

Mémoire

NO to the GNL/Gazoduc project

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Introduction:

Having an academic background in animal and wildlife biology and caring deeply about the future of our planet and the well being of all its communities, human and wild alike, I find it important to express my position with regards to the GNL/gazoduc project aiming to bring shale gas from the west of Canada through a pipeline (gazoduc) to the Saguenay region where it will be liquefied and shipped for export abroad in giant tankers. This is why I firmly oppose this ecocidal project on the grounds that its economic benefits have not been concretely proven, and therefore does not warrant the risk of going ahead with such a dangerous project with probable disastrous impacts on the local and global environment and communities. There is no longer an excuse for building new infrastructure projects that lock us into increased extraction decades into the future. The iron law of development should be: if you wouldn't want it in your backyard, then it doesn't belong in anyone's backyard.

1. Environmental Impacts

1.1 Climate Change

The GNL project is incompatible with the direction Quebec should take as well as Quebec's responsibility towards the world and future generations with regards to climate breakdown.

On the 28th of March 2019, the United Nations speakers warned that we have only 10 years left to prevent irreversible damage from climate change¹. If the GNL project goes forward as planned, it will completely cancel out all of Quebec's efforts to reduce GHG emissions. As it was admitted by the promoters themselves during the first part of the BAPE consultations, the GNL project will possibly add 40 millions of tonnes of GHG per year into the atmosphere which comes up to 1 billion tonnes of GHG over 25 years or double that in 50 years². Even taking in consideration only the downstream emissions of the project (~7.8 million tonnes CO₂), the amount emitted will still cancel out all of Quebec's efforts of reducing GHG emissions since 1990³. Meanwhile Quebec has engaged itself to reach emissions 32.7% below the 1990 levels by 2030⁴. It appears that this project will seriously affect Quebec's ability to reach its GHG emissions reduction targets.

Promoters have claimed that transporting gas through pipelines will emit less GHG than transport by trains over long distances. This claim is misleading since this argument does not take into consideration the GHG emitted by the construction of the pipeline and the impacts of deforestation associated with the pipeline. In addition, a gas pipeline is made of the same materials as a petroleum pipeline. What guarantees that in 25 years when the GNL project will theoretically have come to an end, that the pipeline is not converted into an oil pipeline?

Promoters and other pro-GNL actors have claimed that natural gas is a transition energy because it will be used to replace coal which, they argue, is more polluting than gas⁵. But these calculations do not take

1 <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/ga12131.doc.htm>

2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4h5Tn2YI3Vo&feature=youtu.be&ab_channel=BapeGouv

3 <https://www.ledevoir.com/societe/environnement/548264/l-etude-d-impact-de-gnl-quebec>

4 <http://www.environnement.gouv.qc.ca/changementsclimatiques/engagement-quebec-en.asp>

5 <https://www.borealisation.org/gnl-quebec-a-contresens-de-lavenir/>

into consideration the GHG emission from natural gas throughout the whole process of extraction including during the extractive phase, aka fracking. Furthermore, this claim is unsubstantiated since GNL promoters have admitted themselves that they have signed no contracts with potential buyers⁶ meaning that there is no guarantee or plan that the gas from this project will be replacing coal and not just become an additional energy source on top of coal. It has also been shown that the American companies that are financing the GNL project have shares and investments in the coal industry and as such have no interest in investing in a project that might affect their profits. All this points towards the unlikelihood that natural gas will be replacing coal, but it will rather be an additional source of energy on top of coal.

Furthermore, it has been revealed during the first part of the BAPE consultation that in the event of a worst case scenario of a pierced tanker, it would empty itself in less than 30 minutes which is quasi impossible to stop. The liquefied gas would disperse in the atmosphere in a 2-3 hours, drastically increasing GHG and affecting air quality. This gas could form a cloud of at least 2km that would be set ablaze if put in contact with a source of ignition. There is also a serious risk when it comes to the pipeline portion of the project, with more than 170 pipeline accidents found in 2017⁷. Nothing guarantees safety around pipelines.

1.2 Belugas, Saguenay estuary, local ecosystems

If the GNL project is given a green light, this will mean that one 300m methane tanker will pass every day through the Saguenay fjord to transport liquefied gas. During the question period of the BAPE consultation it has been revealed by the promoter of the project that 400 tanker passages will take place per year, though initially the GNL documents said that 320 tanker passages were planned⁸. These giant tankers will be passing through the unique protected refuge of the Beluga whale of Saint-Laurence, creating a very real risk of extinction for the species. In addition to the risk of collision of béluga whales and the tankers, béluga whales are incredibly sensitive to noise as they depend on echolocation to feed and socialize.

2. Economic aspects of the project

2.1 Jobs- of limited scope

Whenever it comes to polluting infrastructure projects the same argument is always put forward about how they will create jobs. GNL is no different. First of all, nothing guarantees that this will create jobs for local people as in all likelihood the project will require specialists which will be brought from the outside. Second of all, the GNL project is in conflict with other local industries such as the tourism industry, such as whale watching, which will be directly impacted by all the negative environmental impacts of the GNL project. Third, the extractivist sector is a male dominated sector of employment based on the destruction

⁶ <https://coalitionfjord.com/2020/09/25/bape-sur-gnl-gazoduc-des-informations-inquietantes-revelees-malgre-une-pierre-performance-de-la-commission-du-bape/>

⁷ https://www.equiterre.org/sites/fichiers/divers/pipelines_fr-newgraph.pdf

⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTU95lqvAYU&feature=youtu.be&ab_channel=BapeGouv

of nature. Why can't the government create gender balanced jobs rooted in protecting nature, ecosystems and the beautiful parts of Quebec as part of something like a Green New Deal economic plan instead of destroying them for short sighted job creation? In 1933 during the great depression, the F. Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps as part of his New Deal plan⁹. With a little imagination from the part of our government leaders, we could create more employment in natural conservation (soil, wildlife, ecosystems, etc), wildlife research, tree planting, fire fighting, creation of state parks, building fire lookout towers, building and maintaining forest paths and lookout terraces and so on and so on.

2.2 Economic benefits for Quebec- uncertain

The economic benefits of the GNL project for Quebec and local communities have not been concretely proven.

To begin with, the majority of investments from this project will go outside of Quebec as we have learned during the questioning phase of the BAPE consultation¹⁰. Questions from citizens have revealed that while the promoter was initially promising 9 billions \$ in investments, in reality the investment will only be 2.6 billion \$ during the construction phase of the project and less than a billion during the operation phase of the project¹¹. The company has hidden information and promised a lot more than it can actually deliver which is dishonest and misleading.

In addition GNL is owned and financed by american companies which will potentially make big profits and this money will not be coming into communities. It has also been confirmed that the companies behind GNL stack money in offshore bank accounts and as such will not profit the population from the amounts potentially made from GNL¹². Instead, infrastructure projects in Quebec must be nationalized and organized in a coop manner.

Furthermore article 64 on municipal fiscality stops municipalities affected by the project from taxing equipment and installations. It is therefore unknown how much municipalities can actually profit from this project. *“Certains diront qu'Énergie Saguenay est un projet de développement régional. Le projet est accueilli en sauveur dans une région éclopée par la crise forestière : “Ça va apporter des jobs”. En vérité, il s'agit de spéculation financière; d'un pari dans lequel les communautés locales, l'environnement et le climat ont tout à perdre.”*¹³ - Borealisation

The fossil fuels industry has been affected by the current world wide pandemic. In Canada, fossil fuel companies are pressuring public institutions for financial help. In february, the major investor of the

9 <https://www.history.com/news/civilian-conservation-corps-projects>

10 <https://coalitionfjord.com/2020/09/24/la-vaste-majorite-des-investissements-de-gnl-gazoduq-iraient-a-lexterieur-du-quebec/>

11 <https://coalitionfjord.com/2020/09/24/la-vaste-majorite-des-investissements-de-gnl-gazoduq-iraient-a-lexterieur-du-quebec/>

12 <https://www.tvanouvelles.ca/2019/11/06/peu-dimpots-payés-et-des-retombees-pour-des-paradis-fiscaux>

13 <https://www.borealisation.org/bulle-de-gaz-sur-le-saguenay/>

Energie Saguenay GNL project, Warren Buffet, abandoned the project for two major reasons: uncertainty of the gas market in Europe and the elevated costs associated with the GNL project as compared to its competitors¹⁴. So if the government risks itself in injecting public funds into the project, it might not be able to get them back, explains Colin Pratte from the Institut de recherches et d'informations socioéconomiques (IRIS)¹⁵.

Instead of encouraging and investing in this project, the money from GNL can instead be used to in many other things including investment into an economy in balance with the Earth's limits, expanding the economic sectors that are already low-carbon such as care giving, teaching, social work, conservation and research, arts and public interest media. Another type of economy is possible, one based on renewable energy, localized economy and energy democracy. For communities to truly benefit from energy projects, they need to collectively control these new energy systems. A non polluting economy can create countless openings for multiple wins. For example a universal program could be created to build energy efficient homes and retrofit existing housing while ensuring lowest income communities and neighbourhoods will benefit first and receive job training and opportunities that reduce poverty over the long term. For more information and ideas for an alternative truly green economy see Leap Manifesto ¹⁶.

14 <https://iris-recherche.qc.ca/blogue/energie-saguenay-des-fonds-publics-bien-investis>

15 <https://iris-recherche.qc.ca/blogue/energie-saguenay-des-fonds-publics-bien-investis>

16 <https://leapmanifesto.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Manifesto-en.pdf>