



**PRESS RELEASE
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THE COMMUNITY OF OPITCIWAN SOON TO BE POWERED BY A FOREST BIOMASS COGENERATION PLANT

Nitaskinan (Trois-Rivières), February 2, 2023 – The Conseil des Atikamekw d'Opitciwan (CAO), Hydro-Québec (HQ) and the Société en commandite Onimiskiw Opitciwan (SCOO) have forged a historic agreement to build a forest biomass cogeneration plant to supply Opitciwan. The future off-grid system will be the first of its kind in an Indigenous community in Québec.

The agreement opens the door to the next stages of this project that's been long desired by the community. With an installed capacity of 4.8 MW, the plant is scheduled for commissioning in July 2026. The 25-year agreement, which has the option of a 15-year extension, also involves the acquisition and installation of a dryer at the Opitciwan sawmill.

Once in operation, the plant will ensure the community a reliable, sustainable and renewable electricity supply. The project will also contribute significantly to local job creation and economic development by consolidating and maximizing the activities of the sawmill, whose majority shareholder is the CAO.

With the overall costs at an estimated \$60.2 million, provincial and federal government contributions will be required along with investments from the proponents (SCOO and CAO). In terms of jobs, 40 workers will be hired for the construction phase, with about 15 permanent jobs to be created once the facility is up and running.

Lastly, though the current diesel generators must be kept as a back-up source to ensure power supply reliability, the project represents a major step forward in terms of environmental conservation and the fight against climate change. Diesel consumption is expected to decrease by roughly 85%.

The new facilities will optimize use of forestry resources, reduce noise and odor pollution, drastically cut fossil fuel dependence and significantly lower the transport related to diesel and wood products (bark and raw timber). In total, annual GHG emissions are expected to be reduced by 13,000 t of CO₂ equivalent, or 325,000 t of CO₂ equivalent over 25 years—results that are comparable to removing 5,000 cars from the roads each year.

Quotes

Jean-Claude Mequish, Chief, Conseil des Atikamekw d'Opitciwan

"The forest biomass cogeneration plant project holds great promise for our community and meets our essential electricity supply needs. Not only does it tick every box in terms of social acceptability, sustainability and technical viability, but it will also spur social and economic development. I am confident that the governments of Quebec and Canada will put their shoulder to the wheel to ensure the necessary funding for its realization."

Julie Boucher, Vice President – Sustainability, Community Relations and Communications, Hydro-Québec

"This is an excellent example of what we seek to attain in terms of sustainability: reducing our carbon footprint while generating positive spinoffs for the community. We are very pleased to be part of this project that has been so eagerly awaited by the community and which will have lasting positive impacts for Opitciwan."

Denis Clary, President, Société en commandite Onimiskiw Opitciwan

"Replacing the current diesel plant with one that's powered by forest biomass from the sawmill is a huge step forward. Not only will the impact be economic, with new well-paid jobs and promising development prospects, but it will also have major benefits for the environment. Cutting annual GHGs emissions is good for our people's health and helps improve the environmental performance of Québec and Canada as well."

Patrick Labbé, Manager – Innovation, Major Projects and Conversion, Hydro-Québec

"This historic agreement stems from the desire of all stakeholders to achieve a sustainable energy transition. It would not have been possible without the firm commitment and outstanding team spirit of everyone involved."

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Sources: Conseil des Atikamekw d'Opitciwan, Hydro-Québec and Société en commandite Onimiskiw Opitciwan

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