



Conseil du statut de la
femme

Opinion

Women and Plan Nord:
for Equality in Northern Development

Québec 

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INTRODUCTION

Plan Nord is a government initiative whose purpose is to promote the development of northern Québec's natural resources and tourism potential, by attracting private investors and financing the construction of transportation and communications infrastructures. Substantial investments are expected: over the next 25 years, private and public spending in the region is expected to reach \$82 billion.

The Conseil du statut de la femme has studied this vast project, first to see whether it would promote or impede equality between women and men, and second to assess whether women will be in a position to share in its expected benefits. It seems essential to us that Plan Nord reflect a fundamental value in Québec, equality between the sexes. Our concern is echoed in the guidelines set out in the *Politique pour l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes*, which the Government adopted in 2006 and renewed in that policy's second action plan. Especially crucial, we believe, are the guidelines on economic equality between women and men, greater participation by women in official bodies, and the pursuit of equality in all regions, with consideration given for the specific situation in each. These guidelines should be taken into account in all our economic development projects, and particularly in Plan Nord.

The goal of our examination was to propose adjustments that would enable the people of Québec, through the implementation of Plan Nord, to achieve greater economic equality between women and men. To that end we conducted interviews, face to face and by telephone, with many of the people who are directly concerned by the project, whether because they work for a mining company, share life with a mine worker, or work in a women's shelter, for a school board or in a local community service centre (CLSC) in the territory covered by Plan Nord. We also interviewed elected officials and representatives from Aboriginal communities. Our aim was to include a wide variety of people from different circles, to obtain as clear an understanding as possible of the issues raised for women by this project. We do not however pretend to have chosen a representative sample of all the different players involved, nor to have drawn an exhaustive picture of the situation. This is instead a critical reflection that attempts to identify the potential risks and benefits of Plan Nord for those whose interests we defend: the women of Québec.

We begin by examining the broad outlines of Plan Nord, while asking what conditions would be needed for the collective benefits that are expected to become reality. After describing the economic activities announced or underway on the territory, we look at how the newly created jobs are distributed between women and men. Not surprisingly, there emerges a professional segregation between men and women workers, a division that poses a major obstacle to the full participation of women in the development of the North. Next, the impacts of that development on local communities are analyzed from the point of view of women. We then look into what measures are in place to improve local access to the jobs being created, to resolve social problems that are already present, and to avoid making them worse by the manner in which development takes place. Lastly, we propose measures to better meet the needs of women in northern Québec.

Chapter I

THE PROMISES OF PLAN NORD

Promotional documents on Plan Nord emphasize the territory's immensity, the abundance of its energy and mineral resources, and its considerable tourism potential. They present Plan Nord as "a model sustainable development project", one that should allow all the territory's resources to be developed while minimizing environmental impacts and maximizing social benefits (MRNF 2011). In the 21st century, opening and exploiting a virgin territory, in a province with long experience in mining, would seem to present a unique opportunity to apply the principles of sustainable development. It's a promising vision; but will it stand up against the facts?

1.1. Multi-resource development

The territory covered by Plan Nord has, in recent years, become the focus of intense activity to uncover its potential for mineral extraction and acquire exclusive rights to the most promising deposits.

Plan Nord would amplify that activity, by facilitating access to the vast territory for all companies that wish to exploit its mineral, forest, agricultural, wildlife and energy resources. However, from the private investments announced so far, it appears that what development is actually happening is essentially mono-industrial, centered on mining, despite the Government's expressed desire for the development of the North to unleash the potential of all the natural resources present. Of the many projects begun or announced so far, all but one are mining-related, whether for extraction, transportation of the extracted ore, or the provision of electrical power to mine operations.

There only other project is in the forestry industry, in the region of Nord-du-Québec. Announced in February 2012, the old Domtar pulp mill at Lebel-sur-Quévillon will be converted to produce dissolving pulp, which is used in making rayon. The output will primarily be exported to textile factories in China.

As for the mining industry, Québec possesses world-class mineral deposits, especially in the territory covered by Plan Nord. In 2011, eight of Québec's seventeen active metal mines were north of the 49th parallel (MRNF 2012: 100). The four iron and ilmenite mines, and our only active nickel mine, are all in this territory. With so many new projects launched in recent years, the regions of Plan Nord will play an ever-growing role in Québec's economy and its mining industry, since 23 of the 35 projects will take place there.

1.2. Sustainable development of resources and the territory

In presenting Plan Nord, the Government promises that northern development will obey the principles of sustainable development:

Plan Nord must be an **exemplary sustainable development project** that integrates energy, mining, forest, bio-food, tourism and transportation development, the development of wildlife, environmental protection and the preservation of biodiversity. It will foster development for the benefit of the communities concerned and Québec overall, in a spirit of respect for cultures and identities (*Building Northern Québec Together*, 2011).

For this promise to be more than words, the meaning attached to the concept of sustainable development is crucial. Development can only be sustainable if its objectives are not just limited to economic efficiency, as normally pursued by private enterprise, but include enhancing the environment and natural resources and creating collective wealth through new economic activities. The success of such a commitment depends on the regulations in force and how well the companies active on the territory live up to their social responsibilities.

Additionally, under the provisions of Bill C-38 adopted on June 18, 2012, the Government of Canada significantly reduced its involvement in the environmental assessment process for large projects. Consequently, it will be imperative that Québec legislators, for the sake of sustainable development, fill the gap left by their federal counterparts and assume responsibility for the environmental assessment of major projects on the territory of Québec, particularly the North.

For mining companies, enhancing the environment requires, first, that production activities be performed in such a way that there is minimal alteration of the environment, and second, that companies take full responsibility for decommissioning at the end of each mine's operating life, an integral part of any project. This is where environmental assessment takes on its full meaning.

As for enhancement of the ore extracted, this means that any withdrawal from the collective heritage must be compensated to the benefit of the entire community. By the principles of sustainable development, it is therefore necessary that the community invest in its stock of capital, to compensate for the loss of value in the natural heritage caused by the extraction of ore, which is a non-renewable resource. To that end, part of the economic value of extracted resources could, for example, be invested in society's productive capital. This would counterbalance the reduction in value of its mineral deposits, generating a more sustained flow of income or benefits for the community. In this sense, the building of roads, railways and communications infrastructures, as announced in Plan Nord, will procure certain benefits for northern communities and Québec society as a whole.

In April 2012, the former Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks tabled a bill that was aimed at reconciling industrial activities with protection of the territory in Plan Nord. In Bill 65, *Act respecting natural heritage conservation and the sustainable*

development of the area covered by Plan Nord, section 14 provided that: “After a public consultation, the Government adopts a conservation strategy applicable to the area covered by Plan Nord under which, by 2035, 50% of the area is to benefit from measures to protect the environment, maintain biodiversity, enhance the natural heritage and promote the sustainable use of resources.” However, the election called in August 2012 put an end to the work in progress. The Conseil will be interested in any decisions taken in this regard by the new Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment, Wildlife and Parks.

Gender equality, the central concern of the Conseil, is intrinsically related to sustainable development. According to UNICEF, the participation of women in economic life and decision-making is beneficial for the entire community:

Gender equality produces a double dividend: it benefits both women and children. Healthy, educated and empowered women have healthy, educated and confident daughters and sons. Gender equality will not only empower women to overcome poverty and live full and productive lives, but will better the lives of children, families and countries as well (UNICEF, page consulted on March 8, 2012).

At the Earth Summit in Rio in June 1992, the principle of gender equality was explicitly linked to achieving sustainable development. In Agenda 21, a comprehensive action plan produced at this summit, Chapter 24 is entitled “Global action for women towards sustainable and equitable development”. It proposes that the governments of the signatory states adopt a set of measures to enable women to become full participants in making decisions and implementing sustainable development activities. The principle of gender equality has become an integral part of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, signed in 1992 (United Nations, 1993: section I).

Twenty years later, equality between women and men should be part of the definition of sustainable development. This was the message of the Contact Group on Gender and Sustainable Development in preparing for the Rio + 20 conference, when it wrote: “Inequalities between women and men, their unequal participation in developing and implementing policies, are one of the principal obstacles to the implementation of international commitments on sustainable development” (Groupe de contact Genre et développement soutenable en vue de Rio + 20, 2011: 3).

In Québec, though gender equality is not explicitly affirmed in the Sustainable Development Act¹, it is encompassed by the concept of equity, one of sixteen principles set out by the Act for the Administration to follow. The second of these principles states: “Development must be undertaken in a spirit of intra- and inter-generational equity and social ethics and solidarity”. Clearly, the perpetuation of inequalities, or worse, the widening of inequalities, would be contrary to the desired balance.

¹ Sustainable Development Act, R.S.Q., c. D-8.1.1, adopted and ratified in April 2006, sec. 6.

1.3. Job creation

The first Plan Nord action plan highlights the fact that substantial investments in mining are flowing to the regions north of the 49th parallel, with investment growth being far stronger in the territory of Plan Nord than the rest of Québec (Finances Québec, 2011: E.22). We can therefore expect to see significant job creation there, and it should be of benefit to all Quebecers, but especially those in the North.

However, this benefit to Québec's economy, as important as it may be, should be put into perspective. The amount of labour required to extract a given quantity of ore today is considerably less than sixty years ago, when iron mining began in the Côte-Nord region.

Mechanization has made substantial gains in the mining industry, a strong trend according to economist Marc-Urbain Proulx: "In the case of iron – which represents more than 40% of Québec's mineral production – in 1950 it took 459 workers to extract a million tonnes. Today it takes around 150" (Shields, 2012: B-1). This trend is likely to continue. For example, a member of the Côte-Nord Chamber of Commerce says the mining companies are making major investments to upgrade their equipment, so they can "produce more with fewer workers²".

On the other hand, Emploi-Québec estimates that from 2011 to 2015, in all sectors combined, 34 700 new jobs will be created in the regions of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, Côte-Nord and Nord-du-Québec. On Emploi-Québec's website, a page for job seekers interested in Plan Nord specifies that jobs are primarily available in mineral extraction, construction, transportation, warehousing and professional, scientific and technical services. These jobs are the direct result of mining development in Québec's North.

Table I presents a list of the trades and professions that are most in demand in Côte-Nord and Nord-du-Québec. It illustrates how economic development in the North is already characterized by a polarization of jobs between predominantly male categories and predominantly female categories. Thus, new jobs are being created in teaching, health and social services, administrative services, retail, the hotel industry and housekeeping. In these sectors, women are finding many new employment opportunities, but this only partially compensates the fact that most of the highest-paying jobs created by Plan Nord are held by men.

The Conseil wishes to stress the fact that as the job market currently stands, only a small proportion of mining and construction jobs are held by women. In this context, and since the project will evolve over many decades, it seems feasible to work toward a more balanced distribution of the jobs created by Plan Nord. To that end, the Government should reaffirm its desire to bring women workers to traditionally male jobs.

² Remarks of Élisabeth Blais, member of the Côte-Nord Chamber of Commerce, collected for the Conseil on June 7, 2012 by Sylvie Bouchard, regional agent for Côte-Nord.

Table I
Côte-Nord and Nord-du-Québec: occupations most in demand in April 2012

Competency level	Occupation title	Number of positions
Professional	4141 – Secondary school teachers	14
Technical	7265 – Welders and brazing machine operators	31
	7311 – Construction millwrights and industrial mechanics (except textile)	22
	1221 – Administrative officers	12
	2241 – Electrical and electronics engineering technologists and technicians	10
	7252 – Steamfitters, pipefitters and sprinkler system installers	10
Intermediate	6421 – Retail salespersons and sales clerks	38
	1453 – Customer service, information and related clerks	31
	6472 – Elementary and secondary school teacher assistants	12
	6435 – Hotel front desk clerks	11
Elemental	6661 – Light duty cleaners	40
	7611 – Construction trades helpers and labourers	11
	6651 – Security guards and related occupations	10
	7622 – Railway and motor transport labourers	10

Source: Emploi-Québec (2012: 4).

1.3.1. Reserved jobs

In principle, some of the direct jobs created by Plan Nord will be offered to residents of northern communities. But since no target has been set for local jobs and no monitoring mechanism has been created, this policy could have little effect. Most of the workforce will in any case be recruited from other regions or even outside of Québec. It should also be noted that recruiting workers from outside the territory raises new issues, which we will examine later.

Indirect jobs, from the purchase of supplies and equipment by mining promoters, and induced jobs, from the consumption of products and services by workers with new income, are also among the benefits of Plan Nord. For the local population to enjoy those benefits, the markets created would have to be supplied by local providers, and mine workers would have to settle in nearby communities.

The Conseil finds it regrettable that a gender-based analysis has not been done of public spending plans for Plan Nord. The meagre share of hours worked by women in the construction industry, and the tiny number of women with production jobs in mining, suggest that if nothing is done to correct the situation the direct and indirect benefits of Plan Nord, in terms of jobs, will be slight indeed for women.

1.4. Better living conditions for the local population

In the first Plan Nord action plan, the Government states that an important benefit of Plan Nord will be the improvement of living conditions in northern communities. The same document also discusses the challenges raised, and the results expected in education, worker training, housing, health and social services and culture.

The manpower strategy for Plan Nord provides for measures to “broaden the level of training and occupational qualification of current residents of the territory covered by Plan Nord”. The training needs of Aboriginal communities will be analyzed, and four new training centres will be built, including one in a Cree community. Tailor-made training for businesses will be developed, in concert with the communities, school boards and educational institutions. Lastly, basic training for the territory’s residents will be improved, with a view toward ensuring their long-term participation in the labour force (*Building Northern Québec Together*, 2011: 37).

1.4.1. Relatively high remuneration

Since the average remuneration of workers in the mining industry is substantially higher than the average Québec wage, the material living conditions of the local population would be improved by earning salaries in mining. In 2006, workers in this industry averaged \$52 000 per year, 42% higher than the average for Québec (Minalliance, 2012: 1). But whether this does much for northern communities will depend on the proportion of jobs filled by local workers.

We will see later that the vast majority of production jobs in mining are currently filled by men. This is why, if nothing is done to encourage women to enter these traditionally male trades, raising the standard of living in northern communities could well be accompanied by a widening of the economic inequalities between women and men.

1.4.2. Lower cost of living and the development of services

Building roads and railways and improving transportation facilities between the North and the rest of Québec should facilitate the provision of consumer goods and equipment to northern communities. For residents there, the result could be a general reduction in the cost of living. But while this favourable effect of northern development is undeniable, it would not shorten the distances between North and South. Bearing in mind that Radisson is 1400 km from Montréal, it would still be costly and time-consuming to transport people and merchandise over such distances.

As a part of Plan Nord, the Government plans to stimulate the creation of local enterprises. A new fund will be created for cooperative development in Nunavik, and the *Fonds pour la réalisation d’initiatives régionales et locales* (regional and local initiatives fund) will continue to be administered. A Québec entrepreneurship strategy will be developed, with a component tailored to northern realities. These measures should foster the emergence of service companies that meet the needs of northern communities, another contribution to better living conditions.

It should be noted that everyday consumer products are far more expensive in northern communities than in cities south of the 49th parallel. In a project initiated by the Canada Research Chair in Comparative Aboriginal Conditions, research teams from Université Laval compared everyday prices in Nunavik stores with prices for the same products (food and consumer goods) in the city of Québec. Data was collected in April 2011, in 22 stores in 13 of the 14 villages of Nunavik, and in 3 stores in Québec. It turned out that a food basket worth \$100 in Québec cost \$181 in Nunavik, with not one item being less expensive in Nunavik than in southern Québec. Additionally, due to poor availability less fresh food is consumed in the smaller communities of Nunavik (Duhaime and Caron, 2012). Even within Nunavik, there are significant differences among the villages in the price and availability of goods, mostly because transportation costs vary and low-volume purchases are more expensive. All of this means that much will have to be done to lower the cost of living in the territory covered by Plan Nord.

1.5. Benefits for Québec as a whole

The benefits of Plan Nord for Québec society will consist of newly created economic activity, tax revenue from the operation of new mines, greater scientific and technical expertise in Québec's labour force, and the building of new infrastructures. The benefits will be measured in terms of wages paid, royalties on the use of mineral and hydro resources, tax revenues derived from that use, new productive infrastructures, and consumption driven by the earnings of workers in new jobs.

As for the magnitude of those benefits, that will depend on how many of those jobs are filled by Québec workers, since foreign labour means a leakage of capital and a loss of internal buying power, particularly if part of the permanent workforce doesn't actually live in the area.

The net value of the eventual benefits for Québec society could also depend on the concessions granted to mining and processing companies in terms of energy pricing. If Hydro-Québec were to sell electricity to such companies at a preferential rate – lower than that required to pay for its new facilities – the result could be higher rates for everyone else.

The processing of extracted ore is another potential source of benefits. Creating jobs in value-added industries would surely be more profitable, from a collective point of view, than exporting raw or concentrated ore to world markets. New production sectors could benefit women by increasing the variety of job prospects. Once again, for such benefits to accrue to local communities or Québec as a whole, smelting, refining and metal fabrication plants must be built on the territory of Québec.

1.6. Government commitments

The exploitation of any new territory presents complex issues that should be considered carefully. That necessity is even greater when the territory is as huge and fragile as that of Plan Nord, an almost virgin land where the population lives in a few small towns and villages, scattered across the immensity. The context becomes still more complex with the overlapping of federal and provincial jurisdictions over resource management,

environmental protection and economic and social development aid. Add to this the presence of an Aboriginal population of multiple nations, each of which has particular agreements with both governments. Anthropologist Carole Lévesque sums up the situation this way:

There is a federal world and a provincial world when it comes to Aboriginal peoples. The Crees, the Inuit and the Naskapis – because of agreements signed in the 1970s and obligations recognized by Québec in this context – maintain direct relations with the Québec Government [...] while the Innus are between the two because of issues related to the common approach (Lévesque, 2012: 4).

The complexity of the questions to analyze, and the multiplicity of interests to reconcile for the project to be a success, make it imperative that governance be informed by a view of the whole. The successive ministers who have headed Plan Nord have put in place a collaborative structure of multiple committees and discussion tables, to develop that vision and select policy directions that will guide the project.

In spring 2011, the Government presented Bill 27 to create the Société du Plan Nord, simultaneously tabling Bill 14, *An Act respecting the development of mineral resources in keeping with the principles of sustainable development*. The Opposition demanded numerous changes, there was intense debate and an impasse was reached. Both bills died on the Order Paper on August 1, 2012 when a general election was called. The intentions of the new Government with respect to Plan Nord and the mining regime had not been stated at time of writing.

Returning to the organizational structures of Plan Nord, the Partners' Discussion Table, created early in the game, was mandated to "lay the foundation for a new partnership for communities in the North" (*Building Northern Québec Together* 2011). It met on nine occasions during the preparation of Plan Nord and twice since its official presentation on May 9, 2011. The Partners' Discussion Table is composed of 26 members representing the municipalities, the Aboriginal nations, companies active on the territory, certain government departments and agencies, and research circles.

Associated with that table is the Aboriginal Partners' Discussion Table, whose mandate is to discuss Aboriginal questions specific to the territory while respecting existing and pending agreements.

Also formed were the Plan Nord Ministerial Committee, comprising sixteen ministers³ with a mandate to oversee and coordinate Plan Nord, and an interministerial committee to plan and coordinate knowledge acquisition initiatives, promote the funding and execution of partnership projects, avoid redundancy and ensure the coherence and integration of information produced and disseminated for Plan Nord.

Though there are seven women (out of 25 members) on the Partners' Discussion Table, it does not have a mandate to improve the benefits of Plan Nord for women.

The first five-year Plan Nord action plan (2011-2016) included public investments to the tune of \$1625 million. Most of that amount (73% or \$1191 million) was allocated to the construction of road and port infrastructures, along with strategic infrastructures for transportation and telecommunications included in the 2010-2015 Québec Infrastructure Plan. In addition, \$382.2 million was allocated to social measures, while \$52 million was to serve for foreign investment prospecting and the coordination of Plan Nord.

The 2012-2013 budget increased funding for the Fonds du Plan Nord. If we include the addition of \$50 million for "new infrastructures" and \$45 million for new social and community measures (\$5 million for manpower training and \$40 million for geographic work), public investments in Plan Nord will total \$1720 million in 2012-2017.

Along with its legal framework and substantial budgetary resources, Plan Nord has an impressive organizational structure of discussion tables and sectoral committees. Will these be able to steer a path through the challenges that will arise with the economic integration of new players, multinational mining companies, into the North and Québec society? The Conseil surely hopes so. Nevertheless, to improve the prospects of women becoming full and active participants in the sustainable development of the North, including the choices and benefits of that development, the Conseil recommends that the mandate of the Partners' Table be enriched to include ensuring that measures are put in place toward that end.

³ They include the:

- Minister responsible for Plan Nord;
- Minister responsible for Native Affairs;
- Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks;
- Minister for Municipal Affairs, Regions and Land Occupancy;
- Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food;
- Minister of Culture, Communications and the Status of Women;
- Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and Export Trade;
- Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports;
- Minister of Employment and Social Solidarity;
- Minister of Finance;
- Minister of Health and Social Services;
- Minister for Natural Resources and Wildlife;
- Minister of International Relations;
- Minister for Social Services;
- Minister of Tourism;
- Minister for Transport.

Chapter II

AN OVERVIEW OF THE TERRITORY

The territory covered by Plan Nord is the part of Québec that lies north of the 49th parallel. According to data from the Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune⁴, the territory covers some 1 200 000 km² and has a population of over 120 000 in 66 communities (MRNF 2011: Appendix D). The latter include northern villages (Inuit), Indian reserves, reserved lands and mixed municipalities⁵.

This vast territory, inhabited for millennia yet scarcely altered until the 20th century, was dramatically changed by the Baie-James project and mining operations that have gone on since the 1950s. In 2009 Hydro-Québec began construction of a new complex of four hydroelectric plants on the Rivière Romaine. Mining activity has been increasing for years: statistics on mining investment show a resurgence, from 2005 on, of exploration and development spending in Nord-du-Québec and Côte-Nord. The territory could be transformed again if the many announcements in recent years of mineral, hydroelectric and transportation projects actually come to pass.

To understand the impacts of northern development on the Aboriginal population, we interviewed people from many Aboriginal communities concerned by Plan Nord. Our work was greatly facilitated by the collaboration of colleagues in the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones⁶.

Given the process of industrialization taking place, do the demographic data show a flow of migrants into Québec's North? In this chapter we answer that question, while exploring the dynamics between northern communities, mining operations and the workforce drawn to them.

2.1. Demographics

The 2011 Census of Population counted 129 893 people living in Québec communities north of the 49th parallel. There were 39 720 men, women and children in Aboriginal villages and reserves, while 90 173 were living in mixed municipalities. Tables II and III show the detailed results.

⁴ Now named the Ministère des Ressources naturelles.

⁵ By mixed municipalities, we mean those in which the population is mostly non-Aboriginal.

⁶ We received advice and support from Sylvie Poudrier and Dominic Maltais, in the Direction des relations et du suivi des ententes.

The principal cities and towns, namely Sept-Îles, Baie-Comeau, Chibougamau, Port-Cartier, Havre-Saint-Pierre, Fermont and Lebel-sur-Quévillon, account for more than half (54.2%) of the population of the territory covered by Plan Nord. The Aboriginal population (30.6% of the 129 983 people living there) is distributed as follows:

- for the Cree nation: 16 350 people;
- for the Inuit nation: 12 100 people;
- for the Innu nation: 10 680 people;
- for the Naskapi nation: 590 people.

As shown in Table III, children are a large proportion of the population in many Aboriginal communities, corresponding to a particularly high synthetic fertility index there.

The population density varies widely from one community to another. Though minuscule over the territory as a whole (about one person per 10 km², as shown on the last line of Tables II and III), it becomes much higher on the territory of certain communities. Betsiamites (or Pessamit), an Innu community in the Côte-Nord region, has the highest density, with over 1464 people per km². At the other extreme, Baie-Johan-Beetz has the lowest density with just 2 people per 10 km². The high population density in some communities is closely linked to the problem of inadequate housing, which we discuss later.

Note that the data in Table III, estimated by Statistics Canada, do not correspond to data in the Indian Registry. The expression "Aboriginal identity" is used here in the sense of self-identification with Aboriginal groups (First Nations/North American Indians, Métis and Inuit), unlike the meaning of "Registered Indian" in the statistics of the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones. The Census data have the advantage of being broken down by age and gender.

Table II
Population of mixed municipalities affected by Plan Nord, 2011

Municipality	Women 15 and older n	Men 15 and older n	Children 0-14 n	Combined n	Population density person/km2
Sept-Îles	10 680	10 655	4350	25 685	14.6
Baie-Comeau	9505	9440	3170	22 115	65.2
Baie-Trinité	190	200	35	415	1.0
Chute-aux-Outardes	715	705	230	1645	224.4
Franquelin	125	170	30	325	0.7
Godbout	135	145	20	295	1.8
Pointe-aux-Outardes	540	580	210	1330	17.8
Pointe-Lebel	770	890	320	1970	23.3
Ragueneau	565	630	205	1405	7.6
Port-Cartier	2675	2885	1090	6650	6.0
Aguanish	120	125	35	280	0.5
Baie-Johan-Beetz	40	35	5	80	0.2
Havre-Saint-Pierre	1465	1415	535	3415	1.2
Blanc-Sablon	485	445	175	1105	4.5
Schefferville	55	90	55	200	5.0
Natashquan (township)	110	105	30	245	1.2
Longue-Pointe-de-Mingan	215	210	60	480	1.2
Rivière-au-Tonnerre	130	150	25	310	0.5
Rivière-Saint-Jean	90	115	25	240	0.5
Bonne-Espérance	305	325	105	703	1.1
Côte-Nord-du-Golfe-du-Saint-Laurent	430	405	145	970	0.3
Gros-Mécatina	220	215	70	500	0.6
Saint-Augustin	95	215	65	480	0.4
Fermont	965	1325	585	2875	6.1
Baie-James	505	590	210	1305	0.0
Chapais	625	670	315	1610	25.3
Chibougamau	2965	3200	1370	7535	10.8
Lebel-sur-Quévillon	860	960	340	2160	53.8
Matagami	565	640	320	1525	22.8
Girardville	440	490	170	1100	8.9
Notre-Dame-de-Lorette	75	90	25	190	0.6
Saint-Stanislas	440	475	105	1030	11.5
TOTAL	37 100	38 590	14 430	90 173	0.1

Sources: Statistics Canada 2012 and (for Schefferville) ISQ, Direction des statistiques sociodémographiques 2012.

Table III
Population of northern Aboriginal communities, Québec, 2011

Region	Municipality	Women 15 and older	Men 15 and older	Children 0-14		Combined n	Population density person/km ²
		n	n	n	%		
Côte-Nord, Indian reserves	Betsiamites	865	740	645	28.7	2250	1464.3
	Essipit	115	100	55	20.4	270	243.3
	La Romaine	365	380	275	27.0	1020	1153.6
	Matimekossh	200	155	185	34.3	540	734.1
	Mingan	175	140	140	30.8	455	26.8
	Natashquan	275	305	260	31.0	840	1294.2
	Pakuashipi	105	105	75	26.3	285	n.d.
	Uashat-Malietenam	1000	945	860	30.7	2805	438.3
Côte-Nord, lands reserved for the Naskapi population	Kawawachikamach	200	220	170	28.8	590	19.0
Saguenay- Lac-Saint-Jean	Mashteuiatsh	850	825	540	24.4	2215	152.6
Nord-du-Québec, northern villages	Akulivik	180	190	245	39.8	615	8.0
	Aupaluk	70	70	60	30.0	200	6.5
	Inukjuak	515	555	530	33.1	1600	28.7
	Ivujivik	130	95	145	39.2	370	10.5
	Kangiqsualujuaq	280	300	295	33.7	875	24.9
	Kangiqsujuaq	250	235	210	30.2	695	55.4
	Kangirsuk	175	165	210	38.2	550	9.6
	Kuujuaq	860	855	660	27.8	2375	8.1
	Kuujuarapik	230	225	200	30.5	655	80.2
	Puvirnituq	530	530	630	37.3	1690	19.7
	Quaqtaq	125	125	130	34.2	380	14.2
	Salluit	415	410	525	38.9	1350	93.6
	Tasiujaq	95	85	120	40.0	300	4.6
Umiujaq	135	145	165	37.1	445	16.0	
Nord-du-Québec, lands reserved for the Cree population	Chisasibi	1485	1520	1475	32.9	4480	5.4
	Eastmain	260	265	240	31.4	765	4.9
	Mistissini	1185	1110	1135	33.1	3430	4.0
	Nemasca	265	230	220	30.8	715	7.4
	Oujé-Bougoumou	235	220	265	36.8	720	n.d.
	Waskaganish	755	715	735	33.3	2205	4.4
	Waswanipi	555	580	645	36.2	1780	4.3
	Wemindji	510	465	405	29.3	1380	3.6
	Whapmagoostui	290	300	285	32.6	875	4.6
	TOTAL	13 680	13 305	12 735	32.1	39 720	0.1

Sources: Statistics Canada 2012 and (for Oujé-Bougoumou and Pakuashipi) ISQ, Direction des statistiques sociodémographiques 2012.

When we examine the demographic evolution from 2006 to 2011 of regional county municipalities (MRCs) and equivalent territories (TEs) north of the 49th parallel, we find that the three MRCs comprising Nord-du-Québec underwent very strong population growth, in contrast to MRCs in Côte-Nord and Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean (ISQ, 2012).

While the population of Nord-du-Québec grew overall by 5%, that of Côte-Nord shrank by 0.8%. These rates do not reflect the demographic growth caused by the influx of workers in permanent or temporary camps. Though the latter spend more than half their time in the community where they work, as “permanent non-resident workers” they are counted as living elsewhere, in the community of their principal residence⁷.

In Nord-du-Québec, in 2006-2011 the Aboriginal TEs of Eeyou Istchee and Kativik saw their population increase by 20.3 and 16.4 per thousand respectively, placing them among the MRCs and TEs with the fastest growth. However, as the Institut de la Statistique du Québec (ISQ) points out, Eeyou Istchee and Kativik are different from the others in that “their demographic expansion is not due to their force of attraction but to a particularly high fertility rate, much higher than the Québec average” (ISQ, 2012: 136). It’s worth noting that Nord-du-Québec has the highest synthetic fertility index in Québec, with 2.81 children per woman in 2011, followed by Côte-Nord (2.07 children per woman). The synthetic fertility index is 1.69 for Québec women overall (ISQ, 2012: 36).

The fertility rate of adolescents is especially high in Côte-Nord and Nord-du-Québec, as shown by the following table. This reality should not be taken lightly, though the drop over two years is a positive sign.

Table IV
Births for 1000 girls (under 19)

Year	Côte-Nord	Nord-du-Québec	Québec overall
2009	28.9	95.0	10.8
2011	20.6	68.6	8.8

Source: ISQ 2012.

While the population of Côte-Nord as a whole declined from 2006 to 2011, the MRC of Caniapiscau grew by 10.9 per thousand per year. In Fermont and Schefferville, mining and construction work attracted new residents within the limits of the available housing, as we will see in section 2.2.

Elsewhere, the MRC of Sept-Rivières posted average annual growth of 5.6 per thousand, while the MRC of Minganie kept a fairly stable population, with a growth rate of 0.6 per thousand.

⁷ Under Census rules, “husbands, wives or common-law partners who live away from their families while working, but return to their families regularly (for example, on weekends) should consider the residence they share with their spouse or partner as their usual place of residence, even if they spend most of the year elsewhere” (Statistics Canada, 2012).

In Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean, the MRCs of Fjord-du-Saguenay (+ 9.1 per thousand per year) and to a lesser extent Lac-Saint-Jean-Est (+ 1.6 per thousand) saw their population increase. However, three MRCs in Côte-Nord underwent a significant decline in population: Haute-Côte-Nord (- 12.1 per thousand), Golfe-du-Saint-Laurent (- 9.8 per thousand) and Manicouagan (- 6.1 per thousand) (ISQ, 2012).

2.2. The housing market

Booming economic activity has caused the population of some northern Québec communities to expand dramatically. This in turn has transformed the housing market, pushing rents higher in several centres. Sept-Îles, Fermont, Schefferville, Chibougamau, Matagami and Lebel-sur-Quévillon, all of which were built in the decades after the war as a direct result of mining activities, today face the challenges of new growth.

A housing crisis has developed in several towns in northern Québec. Housing is becoming unaffordable for anyone not employed by a company that provides it. This makes it more and more difficult for new families to settle in these communities. In Côte-Nord, vacancy rates are at record lows: vacancies in Baie-Comeau dropped from 4.8% in 2011 to 2.0% in 2012, while in Sept-Îles they declined from 0.7% to 0.3% (Lecavalier, 2012).

2.2.1. Fermont

In Fermont, from 2011 to 2012 the population doubled. The cause of this rapid increase was the coming of workers hired by ArcelorMittal Mines Canada and Cliffs Natural Resources or the construction companies serving them. The mayor of the town laments the fact that so many of the mining companies' permanent workers are non-residents. The case of Fermont is a good illustration of what happens when a small community is invaded by mining giants, so we will discuss it here at some length.

Fermont grants permission to the mining companies to set up temporary camps for construction workers building residential complexes for the mines' permanent employees. The mining companies request such permission on a piecemeal basis, making it impossible for municipal authorities to do proper urban planning.

Some workers at the Mont-Wright complex own condos purchased from their employer, ArcelorMittal Mines Canada. Their title of property is conditional on holding a job at Mont-Wright, and if they quit they must sell their condo back to the company. This allows permanent employees to move with their families into comfortable homes near the mining complex. Since their families are with them, as months and years go by they will integrate into the community of Fermont.

However, since a person must work at the mine to hold a lease on a company condominium, which is rarely the case with miners' spouses⁸, a breakup can put the worker's ex-spouse and children in the street. To avoid that, some workers' spouses are in a sense held prisoner in their relationship. Housing is hard to come by in Fermont, and the condos are too expensive for people on a modest salary. The small amount of social housing is fully occupied.

Other employees of ArcelorMittal Mines Canada rent rooms in homes that have been converted to shared housing. They do not become permanent residents, since after each period of work they leave to rejoin their family in the South. The work shifts (either 12 days on / 12 days off, or 14 days on / 14 days off) determine their presence or absence in Fermont, with rotating cohorts of workers arriving and leaving by air shuttle service. It's the "fly-in fly-out" principle.

In 2012, Cliffs Natural Resources built a hotel in Fermont for its non-resident permanent workers. The reception and housekeeping staff consists entirely of Aboriginal women⁹.

Housing is not a free market in Fermont. The website of Carrefour Jeunesse-Emploi de Duplessis offers the following warning to anyone wishing to move to Fermont: "To have access to housing, you must have a job with an employer that has housing available (such as mining companies, schools, the municipality, health centre and a few entrepreneurs)" (Carrefour Jeunesse-Emploi de Duplessis, 2012: 1).

2.2.2. *Schefferville area*

In 2011, Schefferville had a population of 200. Built by the Iron Ore Company of Canada, which operated a mine on an adjoining property, the town was incorporated in 1955 under the *Act respecting the municipal organization of mining villages*. Before the mine closed in 1981, Schefferville's population reached a peak of 4500. The Innu population of the village of Matimekosh-Lac-John, some 2 km away, gradually moved into the town (Durand, 2011). Kawawachikamach, the only Naskapi village in Québec, is 12 km from Schefferville. Combined, the town and the two Aboriginal communities now number 1330 people.

Nearby, the New Millennium Iron Corporation has acquired the rights to extract ore from an iron deposit that extends for over 200 km in the Labrador Trough, straddling the Québec/Labrador border. From the personal accounts we collected, some of the Innu families in and around Schefferville feel invaded, disrespected. In their view, open-pit mining destroys the land, creates a lot of dust and makes people sick. Many find the extraction rate abnormally high. They would accept it better if things went more slowly.

The mining companies buy up all the available apartments so they can assign them to their employees; some workers rent rooms or houses on Innu land.

⁸ We emphasize the fact that title can only be held by a person with a job at the company, and that the spouse has no part in that title.

⁹ Remarks of Véronique Dumais, journalist for the *Trait d'union du Nord*, collected for the Conseil on June 7, 2012 by Sylvie Bouchard, regional agent for Côte-Nord.

2.2.3. Sept-Îles

With a vacancy rate of almost nil (0.3%), Sept-Îles is a difficult place for new arrivals to find housing. The scarcity is pushing rents higher. A mental health worker we interviewed there says housing is so scarce, owners are subdividing their homes so they can rent rooms to workers¹⁰.

2.2.4. Nunavik

In Nunavik, housing conditions were problematic in many communities even before the mines and their workers came. In houses made for four or five, it's not uncommon to see up to fifteen people crowded together. Overcrowding is the root cause of major social problems, though other factors are at play as well. Alcoholism and drug addiction are ever-present in the Inuit communities, bringing with them violence and suicides. These problems cannot be resolved as long as nothing is done about their causes (remarks of Lisa Qiluqqi Koperqualuk, President of Saturviit Inuit Women's Association, on May 2, 2012).

It's worth noting that even in 2006, nearly half (49%) of the Inuit population of Nunavik was living in overcrowded housing, whereas just 3% of non-Aboriginal Canadians were in similar situations (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Under a home ownership program for Nunavik residents, Plan Nord provides for the construction of 300 social housing units and 200 other dwellings. Even when added to the 340 units already announced, this expansion of the housing stock may not be enough, since in 2008 and 2010 the need was estimated at around 1000 units (MacKay, 2012: 14).

2.3. Regional economy

Since the 1950s, the socio-economic reality of the regions of Plan Nord has been shaped by mining, while in the mid-1970s the ancestral lands of Cree and Inuit communities were transformed by the Baie-James hydroelectric project. Northern towns like Schefferville, Gagnon and Fermont were built in the 20th century to serve the mining industry, their vitality being determined by the iron market. Thanks to the huge amounts of ore extracted and the railroads for moving it from mine to dockside, Sept-Îles became the most important mining port in North America.

The economy of these regions is poorly diversified, centered on natural resources and fishing. The manufacturing sector is limited to providing goods and services to the mining operations and hydroelectric sites, along with primary processing. The service sector is dominated by transportation, electricity production and tourism.

¹⁰ Remarks of Sonia Dumont, Director of L'Âtre in Sept-Îles, collected for the Conseil on June 6, 2012 by Christine Chabot, regional agent for Côte-Nord.

In recent years, plant closures in the Côte-Nord and Nord-du-Québec regions have highlighted the dependence of the regional economy on primary industries. In Nord-du-Québec, the share of regional domestic product (RDP) generated by manufacturing fell from 10.9% in 2005 to 3% in 2008 (ISQ, 2011).

Today, seven mining companies are in production on the territory covered by Plan Nord. There are two gold producers (Aurizon and N. A. Palladium) in the northern part of Abitibi, while in Nord-du-Québec a nickel producer, Xstrata, operates a large deposit of nickel sulfides to which it acquired rights in 2006. Iron and ilmenite producers in Côte-Nord include ArcelorMittal and Cliffs Natural Resources, employing respectively 1500 and 200 workers, while Rio Tinto Fer et Titane employs 300 at its ilmenite mine¹¹ and operates the railway linking Schefferville to Sept-Îles via Wabush and Fermont.

Table V shows the importance of mining activity in northern Québec. As can be seen, already nearly 5000 people are employed by the industry.

Table V
Mines operating on the territory covered by Plan Nord, 2012

Region	Mine	Company	Head office	Substances extracted	Number of jobs
Abitibi-Témiscamingue	Casa Berardi	Mines Aurizon	Vancouver	Gold	500
	Géant Dormant	N.A. Palladium	Toronto	Gold	148
Jamésie and Eeyou-Istchee	Persévérance	Xstrata	Zug (Switzerland)	Copper, zinc, gold and silver	235
Côte-Nord	Lac Bloom	Cliffs Natural Resources	Cleveland (United States)	Iron	290
	Lac Tio	Rio Tinto, Fer et Titane	London	Iron and titanium dioxide	250
	Mont-Wright	ArcelorMittal	Luxembourg	Iron	1 500
Nord-du-Québec	Raglan	Glencore-Xstrata	Zug (Switzerland)	Nickel	850

Source: MRNF 2012 and websites of the companies listed.

¹¹ Rio-Tinto, Fer et Titane also employs 1400 workers at its metallurgical complex at Sorel-Tracy.

2.4. A strongly segregated job market

In Québec, the network overseen by the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail (job market partners commission) closely monitors the state of the job market and observed or expected manpower needs. The network includes sectoral workforce committees and advisory committees that focus on worker groups with particular problems entering and staying in the job market.

Additionally, in 2011 the Government held two public consultations on how Québec society should best respond to demographic change, particularly the fact that as the population ages we could move from a situation of surplus labour to a labour shortage, and there could also be shortfalls in pension funds.

However, these consultations did not result in the Government putting a priority on an obvious part of the solution: reducing the segregation of female labour into traditionally female jobs. The Conseil finds this regrettable, having long attempted to draw the Government's attention to the under-representation of female labour in traditionally male professions and trades. By removing the obstacles to women entering trades like those in construction and mining, companies would gain access to a larger pool of qualified labour. Simultaneously, Québec society would advance significantly along the path to equality between women and men.

In schools, for example, we see little interest among girls for careers in the mining industry. On the contrary, in 2008-2009, 64.6% of girl students at the secondary vocational level were concentrated in the ten programs where women have always predominated: secretarial studies, health assistance and nursing, accounting, assistance in health care facilities, hairdressing, esthetics, dental assistance, interior decorating, pharmacy technical assistance and home care assistance (Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 2010: 16).

At the university level, women interested in geology are relatively numerous. In autumn 2012 the Geology Department of Université Laval had 16 women out of 33 B.A. students, while the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi had 9 out of 30, for an average of 40% female students.

A recent study by the Commission de la construction du Québec showed that the number of women actively working in the construction industry is still very low, though it has risen since 1997. By 2010 women represented 1.24% of the entire construction workforce (Commission de la construction du Québec, 2011: 4). In production jobs, in 2010 women represented 2.3% of workers at the apprentice level, but just 0.4% of workers at the journeyman level. Lastly, women accounted for 0.83% of the hours worked in the trades, and 1.2% of the hours worked in construction jobs.

As for the mining industry, in 2011 women represented 13.9% of all workers employed in Québec in mineral, oil and gas extraction along with fisheries and forestry (ISQ, 2012). However, narrowing the focus to production jobs reveals much lower rates of female labour, since women are mostly in administrative jobs (management, finance and administration). This is illustrated by Table VI.

Table VI
Presence of women in the mining industry, Québec, 2006

Occupation	Women %	Men %
Ore extraction and preparation (underground mines)	0.7	99.3
Supervisors, mining and quarrying operations	5.7	94.3
Mine labourers	10.0	90.0
Management	11.0	89.0
Finance and administration	63.3	36.7
All mineral extraction professions	12.9	87.1

Source: Statistics Canada (2006), cited in Handal (2010: 31).

It should be noted that for decades, the law prohibited women and girls from working underground in mines, except as engineers or geologists. This provision remained in force until 1977.

As a general rule, the mining companies have no particular strategy for recruiting more female workers, being content to choose employees from whatever qualified candidates show an interest¹². However, the Vice-President of Xstrata Nickel Mine Raglan, a woman, points out that female heavy equipment drivers are appreciated because they are more safety-conscious and have fewer accidents than their male colleagues¹³.

Some attempts have been made to encourage the hiring of women. In 2011, since the mine had many vacancies and the spouses of many employees had no jobs, ArcelorMittal Mines Canada initiated a pilot project to train women as truck drivers so they could work at the Mont-Wright mine. Developed in collaboration with the sectoral workforce committee for the mining industry and the Centre Émersion in Baie-Comeau (whose mission is to support the integration of women into non-traditional jobs), the project was to receive financial support from Emploi-Québec. Unfortunately, it had to be abandoned because not enough women registered to meet the target of 15 participants¹⁴.

The small number of women who came forward for this project illustrates, in our view, the importance of providing information and building awareness to interest girls in traditional male trades. As shown by the Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail (CIAFT – council for women's access to work), girls in vocational or technical studies know little or nothing about these trades, which plays a critical role in their choice of career. It was also noted that career guidance and employability services are not at all proactive about diversifying the career choices of young women (CIAFT, 2011).

¹² Remarks of Guy Auger, Project Manager in the sectoral workforce committee for the mining industry, collected by the author on April 17, 2012.

¹³ Remarks of Dominique Dionne, Vice-President of Xstrata Nickel Mine Raglan, collected on August 28, 2012 by Julie Miville-Dechêne, President of the Conseil du statut de la femme.

¹⁴ Just three women registered in the pilot project.

For women who do enter the mining industry, they have a hard time climbing the corporate ladder. Six years ago, that prompted Xstrata Nickel – operator of the Raglan mine – to set up a mentoring program. The most promising young professional women get advice from a manager chosen from among the 100 most influential women in Canada. So far, 50 employees have benefited from this program. Another strategy deployed at the Raglan mine is to distribute women workers by threes to lessen their isolation in the work teams, in a difficult environment that is still very masculine¹⁵.

In open-pit mines, equipment that requires less physical strength, combined with the need for safety-conscious heavy equipment drivers, in principle opens new possibilities for women. But this information still has to reach the ears of girls before they settle on a choice of career.

We were unable to obtain overall data on the proportion of women on Plan Nord worksites, but one illustration suggests that they must be rare on at least one site: Romaine. In the spring 2012 edition of *Nui Uapaten*, the journal of the Romaine project for Aboriginal employees, the headline says it all: “Des gars d’action!” (guys who like action!). The centre page presents five tradesmen, complete with photos. There are no women. No attempt was made to interest women readers in the construction trades (*Nui Uapaten*, spring 2012). A forthcoming opinion of the Conseil will examine the reasons for the low participation of women in the construction industry. Some possible solutions will be proposed to increase that participation.

Information campaigns on the various trades are offered in secondary schools and colleges. For the Conseil, these campaigns should be reassessed with a view toward attracting more girls to programs leading to traditionally male trades.

2.4.1. Obstacles faced by women: two canadian studies

In British Columbia, where the mining industry expects to undergo a labour shortage, a report published in 2011 draws an illuminating picture of the obstacles facing women, and suggests some avenues of solution. In that province, women represent 16% of the workforce in the mining industry, but hold only 5% of jobs traditionally held by men. Also revealing is that 64% of school guidance counsellors know little or nothing about the industry.

A study of female mine workers revealed that they were drawn to the industry by the more generous pay and benefits. When they end up leaving their jobs, the main reasons are the long hours, the isolation and the lack of day-care services, which make it impossible to balance work and family. The male culture of the work environment is also a barrier to entry. Female workers perceive that they are not respected and their abilities are questioned. The small number of women in management contributes to the perception that women are not equal to men in this industry (Howegroup Public Sector Consultants Inc., 2011).

¹⁵ Remarks of Dominique Dionne, Vice-President of Xstrata Nickel Mine Raglan, collected on August 28, 2012 by Julie Miville-Dechêne, President of the Conseil du statut de la femme.

The study's authors make three recommendations:

- conduct awareness campaigns among employers about the importance of having more female workers; encourage employers to offer mentoring programs;
- improve recruiting by targeting women, Aboriginals and immigrants, and by informing school guidance staff about career possibilities in the mining industry;
- improve the retention of women workers by offering more flexible hours, part-time jobs and onsite day-care.

A cross-Canada study reports the same obstacles, but adds that wage disparities between women and men are even higher in the mining industry than elsewhere: women's incomes are 32% lower than men's, a gap found across all age groups and most job groups. For example, in iron ore extraction the average salary for men is \$81 196, while that for women is \$55 278.

In a survey of female mine workers, respondents said that travel to remote places is a big problem because it is often unexpected. This makes it impossible for mothers to plan their lives. Unsurprisingly, women report fewer barriers to career advancement when there are women in upper management. And, still according to this cross-Canada study, women feel that companies are doing nothing about a major obstacle: the dominant male culture, which does not make room for women (Mining Industry Human Resources Council, 2010).

2.4.2. The contractual obligation program

On the employer side, binding measures have been in force since 1988 toward balancing the representation of women and other groups that suffer job discrimination in the private sector. The contractual obligation program, initially designed to increase the representation of women in traditionally male jobs, was extended to other groups that face systemic job discrimination, namely Aboriginals, visible minorities and disabled people. In 2011, 140 Québec companies were subject to this program.

Under the contractual obligation program, to be eligible for Québec Government contracts or subsidies worth \$100 000 or more, businesses with 100 or more employees must implement an equal access to employment program pursuant to the *Charter of human rights and freedoms*. The same requirement applies to subcontractors meeting the same criteria. Construction companies however have been exempt from this obligation. As for mining companies, since any government assistance they receive is usually in the form of tax credits, few are affected by the contractual obligation program. Indeed, of the 405 mining companies active in Québec in 2012, only 4 are subject to the requirements of the program, and none have operations north of the 49th parallel.

2.4.3. The Act respecting equal access to employment in public bodies

In force since April 1, 2001, the *Act respecting equal access to employment in public bodies* extended the requirement for equal access programs to all public and parapublic bodies, municipalities, school boards and public health institutions. Hydro-Québec is

also subject to this act, and given its role in northern development the Government should ensure that its equal access programs are respected.

2.5. *Services*

Though a company town, Fermont is more than might be expected. It was built in 1974 by Québec Cartier, a mining company that was then a subsidiary of United States Steel. When Québec Cartier was drawing up its project to exploit the Mont-Wright deposit, it saw the erection of a town near the future mine as essential to the project's success. A corporate document shows that it wanted to give its workers and their families a healthy living environment:

The company took charge of providing Fermont with everything needed to receive its workers. This would mean building commercial, residential, sports, recreational and community facilities. It would also include all civil engineering, including forest clearing, levelling, laying asphalt and installing sanitary and storm sewers, water mains, a water treatment plant, underground conduits, street lighting and fire-hydrant heating, outdoor parking, parks, and transformer and electrical distribution vaults. It would be no small task. In just a few years, in an arid land, they would have to build all the infrastructures for a complete town... Construction of the basic town would require an investment of some \$100 M (Québec Cartier blog, 2007).

When in 2005 Arcelor S.A. acquired the assets of Québec Cartier, it also inherited the infrastructures of the town. However, an information document notes that "the sport and community infrastructures were ceded to the Ville de Fermont by the mining company" (Rouleau, 2010: 6-7).

Across the territory of Plan Nord as a whole, health services are coordinated by regional authorities:

- the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services;
- the Centre régional de santé et de services sociaux de la Baie-James;
- the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay;
- the North Shore Health and Social Services Agency;
- the Centre de santé et de services sociaux Maria-Chapdelaine.

In each centre, services were put in place to meet the needs of local communities, so they are quickly overwhelmed by mine employees with workplace injuries or chronic diseases. The lack of resources rebounds on the community, since the nursing staff has less time to provide medical care to the local population.

Similarly, municipal services (drinking water, sewers and roadwork, sports activities, recreation) as well as day-care and commercial services, all of which were adequate for the local population, are now stretched to the limit due to the massive influx of workers with mining and construction companies.

While the mining companies hope their workers will integrate harmoniously into the host community, generally they do not believe they should contribute to the effort by providing a company day-care service: "We're not in that line", said a spokesperson for one such company.

Chapter III

FORESEEABLE EFFECTS OF PLAN NORD

For a few years now, the territory covered by Plan Nord has been the scene of intense mining activity stimulated by rising in metal prices. From 2001 to 2011 the price of gold multiplied by nearly 6 (5.8), that of silver by 8, that of nickel by nearly 4 (3.8), that of copper by 5.5 and that of iron by 12.9 (MRNF, 2011: 6).

In 2011 and 2012 several multinational companies acquired rights to world-class deposits in northern Québec. The potential of these reserves is so great it has driven feverish speculative activity to gather up mining rights across the territory covered by Plan Nord.

The history of the Raglan mine is a good illustration of the North's attractiveness. Located in Nunavik between the Inuit villages of Salluit and Kangiqsujaq, the mine entered production in 1997 after 30 years of exploration, negotiation and development. In 2012 it was the only nickel mine operating in Québec, and the deposit is one of very great value. According to Natural Resources Canada, "The Raglan mine sits upon one of the world's finest sulphide nickel deposits" (Natural Resources Canada, 2007: 1).

After the merger of Noranda and Falconbridge in 2005, and the acquisition of the new company by Xstrata PLC in August 2006, the operator of the Raglan mine took the name Xstrata Nickel.

Two other large projects could transform living conditions in the Inuit communities of Nunavik: Lac Otelnuq and Hopes Advance Bay.

The Lac Otelnuq project, 160 km north of Schefferville and 250 km south of Kuujuaq, would be the biggest mining project in the history of Canada. Fifty million tonnes of iron ore could be extracted every year for over 100 years. The operator would be a state-owned Chinese company (Wisco), in partnership with Canadian company Adriana Resources. The project includes the construction of a concentrator and a pellet plant on the site of the mining complex (Ouellet, 2011).

As for the Hopes Advance Bay project, it is an iron mine being developed by Oceanic Resources, 10 km from the village of Aupaluk. This project would bring 1500 workers to a community of 174 people. Though the company is in constant dialogue with local residents, the latter are deeply concerned about the social repercussions of the project, to the point of fearing for their community's survival.

KéMag is another mining project associated with Plan Nord. Located near Schefferville, it sits on an iron deposit that extends for over 200 km in the Labrador Trough, straddling the Québec/Labrador border. The estimated reserves are some 14 billion tonnes of ore, which would make it the largest unexploited iron deposit in the world (Infomine, 2012). In October 2010 New Millennium Iron Corp., whose head office is in Calgary, formed a joint venture with Tata Steel to develop and operate the KéMag project. Listed on the

Toronto Stock Exchange on October 17, 2011, New Millennium holds the rights to the deposit (Toronto Stock Exchange, 2011).

Before proceeding with KéMag, the joint venture is starting with a simpler project called Direct Shipping Ore (DSO) near Schefferville. It will pit-mine the readily available iron ore, then send it by train to the port of Sept-Îles. From there the ore will be shipped to Tata Steel's foundries in Europe.

With 23 projects now in development, northern Québec is booming, and it seems certain that a good many mines will soon begin production. Besides the minerals already being exploited, Québec's subsurface will soon give up an array of other valuable resources, including diamonds, base metals, rare earths, niobium, tantalum, apatite, uranium and lithium. Table VII outlines these projects.

Table VII
Mining projects in development in the territory covered by Plan Nord, as of December 31, 2011

Region	Mine site	Company	Head office	Substance extracted	Project cost M\$	Expected production launch	Jobs expected
Nord-du-Québec	Black Rock	Black Rock Metals	New York	Iron, titanium and vanadium	600	2013	165
	Eleonore	Goldcorp	Vancouver	Gold	1400	2014	400
	Lac Bachelor	Ressources Métanor	Toronto	Gold	150	2014	
	Veza	N. A. Palladium	Toronto	Gold	45	2012	150
	Lac McLeod	Western Troy Capital	Toronto	Base metals and gold	210	2015	250
	Bracemac-McLeod	Donner Metals/Xstrata	Zug (Switzerland)	Zinc and gold	160	2013	
	PDI	Donner Metals/Xstrata	Zug (Switzerland)	Base metals and gold	n.d.	2013	250
	Langlois	Nyrstar Canada	Balen (Belgium)	Base metals, gold and silver	n.d.	2012	180
	Matoush	Ressources Stratéco	Boucherville	Uranium		2013	
	Lavoie	Ressources Abitex	Val-d'Or	Uranium			
	Eastmain	Critical Elements	Montréal	Lithium	270	2013	
	Jamesbay Lithium	Lithium One/Galaxy Resources	Toronto	Lithium		n.d.	
	Whabouchi	Nemasca Lithium	Québec	Lithium	90	2014	70
	Renard	Stornoway	Vancouver	Diamonds	802	2015	300
Côte-Nord	Nunavik Nickel	Jilin Jien Nickel Industry Co. Ltd.	Panshi (China)	Nickel	800	2012	270
	B-Zone	Quest Rare Minerals	Montréal	Rare earths	565	2015	190
	DSO	New Millennium/Tata Steel Minerals	Toronto/Mumbai	Iron		2012	235
	KéMag Taconite	New Millennium/Tata Steel Minerals	Toronto/Mumbai	Iron	4700	2016	1000
	Fire Lake North	Champion Minerals	Toronto	Iron	1400	2015	475
	Lac Otelnuk	Adriana Resources/Wisco	Toronto/Beijing	Iron	2500	2016	2000
	Arnaud	Ressources Québec/Yara International ASA	Montréal/Oslo	Apatite	800	2015	200
	Crevier	Minères du Nord	Toronto	Niobium and tantalum	350	2013	200
	Lac-à-Paul	Ressources d'Arianne	Chicoutimi	Apatite		2015	260

Source: MRNF (2012) and corporate websites. Compiled by: Conseil du statut de la femme.

Recent years have also seen several hydroelectric projects: the Eastmain-1 and Péribonka plants entered service in 2006 and 2007 respectively, while the Eastmain-1-A-Sarcelle-Rupert plant will enter production in 2012. Development work on four power plants on the Rivière Romaine will continue through to 2020, while smaller plants will be built on the Rivière du Petit Mécatina, adding 3500 MW to Hydro-Québec's production capacity.

Completing the picture are the road construction projects announced with Plan Nord. Work on several major new roads has begun across the broad land, altering the environment and the lives of local residents.

Data on construction jobs in Côte-Nord reveal sustained growth since 2007. According to the CCQ, the number of hours worked in 2011 was nearly four times higher than in 2007, in industry, civil engineering and roadwork. This rise in activity is in large part due to investments in Plan Nord.

3.1. Effects of the boom on local communities

Beyond its effects on the natural environment, development will have a profound influence on communities in the region. It will be important to anticipate the effects of that influence and plan mitigation measures, instead of waiting for serious problems to arise.

3.1.1. Housing, families, social life and safety

In Havre-Saint-Pierre, the influx of young families has resulted in a growing waiting list for day-care spaces. In Fermont the mining boom has doubled the population, and families face a day-care shortage. The only day-care centre is full, and the project for a second one has a waiting list of 80 names¹⁶. The mining companies responsible for this growth do not offer workplace day-care services.

As announced in October 2011, the previous Government reserved 200 of the 15 000 new subsidized day-care spaces for the territory covered by Plan Nord. This should at least partly meet the needs of newly settled families. Additionally, in July 2012 the Minister responsible for Family announced that new projects for day-care centres on the territory of Plan Nord would have to include financial participation by a company (such as a miner) for at least 25% of the total cost (including construction and annual operating expenses). In return, the company would receive an equivalent percentage of spaces reserved for the children of its employees (Government of Québec, July 2012). The Conseil approves this development model, which should help change the practices of companies active in the North toward greater participation in social infrastructures.

In the towns and villages of northern Québec, the rapid pace of mining development is exerting upward pressure on rental rates. Families either can't find housing at a reasonable price or must accept substandard housing, which diminishes their quality of life and their children's ability to learn. Note that even before Plan Nord was announced,

¹⁶ Remarks of Véronique Dumais, journalist for the *Trait d'union du Nord*, collected for the Conseil on June 7, 2012 by Sylvie Bouchard, regional agent for Côte-Nord.

many groups were asking the various levels of government to increase funding for social housing, to help families out of the housing crisis.

The housing crisis affects women especially. A social worker with the Commission scolaire du Fer told us that many women have trouble finding housing, especially if they announce that they are single with children or are students. Some end up rotating among friends, a situation similar to homelessness¹⁷.

On the mining sites, women workers can be subjected to sexual harassment. Camaraderie with male colleagues is compromised by gossip among the men as soon as a friendship develops with one of them. Having to keep a distance from the men in their work group makes it difficult for women to integrate into their jobs.

3.1.2. Temporary and semi-permanent camps

Some mine sites are remote from any organized community. Those who work there alternate between long periods of work and extended time off back home, as described in section 2.1.1. They are “fly-in fly-out” workers, rotating back and forth via air shuttle with an entire cohort of other workers on the same schedule.

Located in the northernmost part of Québec, the Raglan mine is a fair distance from the nearest communities, Salluit and Kangiqsujuaq. Travel being by boat or plane, workers can’t easily get to the villages, but contacts between Inuit and non-Inuit occur at the mine complex, where 144 people from the Inuit community are employed. In total, 40% of the Inuit workers are women, primarily in housekeeping. All employees are housed by the company in camps adjacent to the mine.

Nearly 20% of the mine’s workforce is female (188 of 958 employees): this is a higher proportion than elsewhere, and it has risen in recent years. Among the women, the Inuit recruits are mostly in traditionally female jobs. An agreement signed between the then operator of the Raglan mine¹⁸ and representatives of the Inuit communities “guarantees that in according jobs and contracts, preference will be given to Inuit and Inuit businesses in the area that are qualified to do the work” (Natural Resources Canada: 1). The agreement also provides for profit-sharing and a training program for Inuit residents, though very few women have taken advantage of it. Several factors explain this, including the fact that Inuit women are usually responsible for the children, while some have such profound social problems they can’t imagine learning a new trade.

As a whole, women at the mine are relatively numerous in administrative services and professional positions, but very rare (5 out of 157) in mining operations (miners and mining-related functions). This is illustrated in Table VIII.

¹⁷ Remarks of H el ene Garon, Social Worker at the Commission scolaire du Fer, collected for the Conseil on June 6, 2012 by Christine Chabot, regional agent for Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean.

¹⁸ Falconbridge Limited.

Table VIII
Jobs at the Raglan mine

Professions	Women		Men		Total
	n	%	n	%	n
Professionals working in the natural, geological and earth sciences	16	29	40	71	56
Other science professionals (e.g. chemists, biologists)	3	43	4	57	7
Non-geological engineers	3	17	15	83	18
Geology and environmental technicians	5	13	35	88	40
Production and processing technicians	3	6	51	94	54
Industrial and heavy equipment mechanics and construction millwrights	0	0	169	100	169
Heavy equipment and crane operators	0	0	93	100	93
Miners and mining-related jobs	5	3	152	97	157
Accommodation and food services	74	52	69	48	143
Other professions	18	18	81	82	99
Administration and business services	61	50	61	50	122
Total jobs	188	20	770	80	958

Source: Xstrata Nickel.

Young professional women leaving university are easily attracted to these remote but high-paying jobs, where they learn to be versatile. It's an adventure for them. However, when it's time to start a family, most no longer want this nomadic life.

Only basic health care is provided onsite. There are no doctors in the camps near mines, nor any medical infrastructures, but only a super-nurse who can help with common health problems. People who need to be followed by a doctor, such as pregnant women, can't live in such conditions for prolonged periods.

The camps are constructed and outfitted in a more or less permanent fashion, depending on how advanced the mining project is. In temporary camps, generally the women's rooms are separate from those for men, but according to one former employee at Raglan, when production and jobs are increasing rapidly it can happen that their rooms are off the same corridors, with shared showers and toilettes. Such situations make some women insecure and increase the risk of harassment.

3.1.3. Side effects of the fly-in fly-out system

The fly-in fly-out system has impacts on the communities hosting the camps or near them. When such workers circulate or actually live in northern communities, their presence exerts pressure on local services. For example, in several towns there is a shortage of health and day-care services.

The fly-in fly-out system brings workers to the North to “make big money”, but then they return home and spend it in the South. While the companies find this the most economical way to exploit deposits with a limited lifetime, as opposed to building towns that must eventually close, long-time residents of the North see it differently.

The flood of workers to the sites of major projects is disruptive to local communities, because the newcomers, who arrive by the hundreds, develop no sense of belonging to the host community. Knowing they’re just passing through, they can adopt behaviours that are harmful to the community: “The workers get the women pregnant, then they go away, leaving them alone and with no money”, recounted a young Innu woman from Matimekosk. In Fermont, a local newspaper described the harassment to which young women are exposed: “the girls are easily singled out at their place of work or during leisure activities. ‘No matter where we work, the same men keep flirting with us improperly’ one reported” (Dumais, 2011: 15).

The influx of non-resident permanent workers has been associated with a rise in drug and alcohol consumption as well as prostitution, all phenomena that are highly detrimental to nearby municipalities. After collecting accounts from a number of corroborating sources, the Member of Parliament for Manicouagan denounced the emergence of a sex trade in communities near the Romaine site (Genest-Jourdain, 2012). If this was observed north of Havre-Saint-Pierre, it probably exists elsewhere.

In a study of the Baie-James experience, conducted 20 years after the signing of the *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement*, Jean-Jacques Simard examined social changes in the Cree and Inuit communities that were caused by the increased presence of outsiders and the higher incomes of some Aboriginals. On the subject of health, the author observes that “morbidity related to lifestyle, the ‘urbanization’ of habitat and housing, the erosion of community solidarities and the psychosocial isolation of individuals are growing rapidly: mental disorders, domestic violence, drugs and alcohol, accidents and traumas of all kinds, problems related to bad eating habits, smoking, etc.” He adds: “Things are going faster where they were headed already” (Simard, 1995: 80).

In the same vein, the Director of L’Âtre, a mental health shelter in Sept-Îles, says that Plan Nord is exacerbating realities that were already there, and drug consumption is rising. On the latter, she has noticed greater numbers of workers coming to L’Âtre, and expects to see a wave of mental health problems in the months to come¹⁹.

The Coordinator of La Pointe du jour, the Sept-Îles and Port-Cartier CALACS (Centre d’aide et de lutte aux agressions à caractère sexuel – support centre for victims of sexual abuse), told the Conseil about her concern over the increase in the number of girls (minors) in the centre’s clientele, as compared with previous years. Girls are taking refuge in the CALACS after being abused by adults who had given them drugs so they could

¹⁹ Remarks of Sonia Dumont, Director of L’Âtre in Sept-Îles, collected for the Conseil on June 6, 2012 by Christine Chabot, regional agent for Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean.

take advantage of them. The Coordinator said the number of cases is hard to estimate because violence against women is taboo, as is prostitution in small communities²⁰.

The Conseil is concerned about prostitution developing near mines where workers are on fly-in fly-out rotations. As an undesirable effect of northern development, it would be highly detrimental to women.

The families of workers on the fly-in fly-out system can suffer significantly from this type of work. While the father is absent the mother has to bear all the responsibility for the family. When he returns home he may be too disconnected to share the load, or on the contrary, may monopolize the children. In all cases the family dynamic is sorely tested²¹.

3.1.4. An incentive to drop out of school

The prospect of getting a high-paying job, with only a high school diploma or not even that²², can interest many students, especially in towns where there is a mining boom. A Côte-Nord worker explained to the Conseil why young people are dropping out of school in her region.

According to the observations of the Coordinator of the Sept-Îles CALACS, the attraction of high salaries is inciting boys to interrupt their studies before they get a diploma. Offered a job at a mine before even finishing high school, many are tempted to enter the job market. As a corollary, more and more girls are also dropping out to live with a boyfriend making \$25 an hour. When they get pregnant they stay home, thinking they'll return to school when the children are grown, which is quite unrealistic²³.

Major projects suck up all the qualified labour in the region, making small and medium businesses short on staff. At the Commission scolaire de la Moyenne-Côte-Nord, the Director of Educational Services is disturbed by the fact that companies are recruiting among high school students, and choosing younger candidates. Previously, students in difficulty could work toward a Diploma of Vocational Studies with help from special needs teachers. But now, more and more are answering the call of companies offering good salaries regardless of whether they have finished their studies²⁴.

²⁰ Remarks of Martine Michel, Coordinator of the CALACS de Sept-Îles et Port-Cartier, collected by the author on July 17, 2012.

²¹ Remarks of Sonia Dumont, collected for the Conseil on June 6, 2012 by Christine Chabot, regional agent for Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean.

²² Previously a Secondary V diploma was required, but since last year the requirement level seems to have fallen due to the shortage of labour.

²³ Remarks of Martine Michel, Coordinator of the Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel de Sept-Îles La Pointe du jour, collected on July 17, 2012 by the author.

²⁴ Remarks of Mario Cyr, Director of Educational Services for the Commission scolaire de la Moyenne-Côte-Nord, collected for the Conseil on June 8, 2012 by Sylvie Bouchard, regional agent for Côte-Nord.

The most recent data do not allow us to measure drop-out rates since Plan Nord was announced, but the observations of the CALACS coordinator give pause for thought. They are all the more disturbing in that it is north of the 49th parallel that high school students have the greatest tendency to drop out. The statistics show that proportionally, Nord-du-Québec is where leaving school with no qualification or diploma (from secondary general education) happens by far the most often. As shown in Table VIII, in 2007-2008 nearly two thirds (71%) of girls in Nord-du-Québec left their general secondary studies without obtaining a diploma.

In Côte-Nord schools the drop-out rate for girls is not as high (the region comes fourth in this regard), but the phenomenon is disturbing, and we should be paying attention to it. A manager in the Côte-Nord bureau of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport informed the Conseil that in the past year the drop-out rate was especially high among girls at Havre-Saint-Pierre.

In Québec as a whole, over the past decade drop-out rates have fluctuated along a rising trend in all regions. But still, since 1999-2000 the region of Nord-du-Québec has held the record for the highest drop-out rate in Québec. As for Côte-Nord, it generally had a lower rate than Estrie, Montréal and Outaouais throughout the period considered.

Table IX
Drop-out rates from general secondary education, by gender, 2007-2008

Region	Girls %	Boys %
Côte-Nord	24.2	38.8
Nord-du-Québec	71.0	80.9
Combined du Québec	20.2	31.4

Source: Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (2010). Compiled by the Institut de la statistique du Québec.

3.1.5. Mining activity and women's health

Mining raises concerns in communities near extraction sites due to the risks it poses to the environment and human health. Many Plan Nord projects will be carried out near an Aboriginal village or reserve. In 2010, Québec Native Women published an article on the repercussions that mining could have on women's health: "Aboriginal people are particularly vulnerable to environmental contaminants since many of them rely on hunting and fishing for food and on flora for medicinal recipes" (Loiselle-Boudreau, 2010:7).

The author also reports that because of the risks of environmental contamination from uranium exploration and exploitation, Aboriginal women are opposing the authorization of such activities. On the territory covered by Plan Nord, uranium exploration is being done near Uashat-Maliotenam and Natashquan, in the Monts Otish and in Nunavik.

Fears about the harmful effects of radiation on human health are shared by other citizens of Côte-Nord. Two pressure groups have been formed to demand a moratorium on uranium projects: “Sept-Îles sans uranium” and “Minganie sans uranium” (Lévesque, 2012).

What’s more, women may be particularly vulnerable to the toxic effects of certain minerals, including those in tailings and the by-products of processing. Cadmium, for example, causes damage to DNA that prevents cancer-fighting cells from regenerating. Iron in the body controls cadmium absorption, but since some women develop very low levels of iron due to the menstrual cycle, cadmium levels can become dangerously high, causing serious health problems (Loiselle-Boudreau, 2010: 7).

3.2. Aboriginal perceptions of Plan Nord

The 33 Aboriginal communities on the territory covered by Plan Nord belong to four nations: Innu, Inuit, Naskapi and Cree. The position defended by the women of these communities with respect to Plan Nord is largely influenced by the vision of the community to which they belong. And that vision depends in turn on the community’s economic and social context.

North of the 49th parallel, people in the Indian reserves (Innu), reserved lands (Naskapi and Cree) and northern villages (Inuit) will all be affected by the implementation of Plan Nord, for it will unfold in their hunting grounds or near their communities. Mine exploration and development, dam building, road construction, hydroelectric transmission lines: it’s all going on in their own back yard.

We should remember that less than 40 years ago, these people were witness to a previous development phase, when Hydro-Québec carried out enormous projects for the Baie-James complex. This gave rise to important negotiations between the Government and the nations concerned. In 1975, the Government of Québec and representatives of the Cree and Inuit nations of Nord-du-Québec signed the *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement*. Then in 1978 the *Northeastern Québec Agreement* was signed to extend the accord to the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach.

Baie-James physically changed the way of life of the region’s inhabitants. At the same time, the Agreement led to the creation of a plethora of Aboriginal institutions that have structured the societies of all four nations. Today there are some 1800 of these Aboriginal institutions (administrations, groups, schools, policies and programs). This is why anthropologist Carole Lévesque says the Aboriginal communities have learned to organize themselves and make their societies function.

3.2.1. Women

Many of the Aboriginal women we met to discuss Plan Nord said they had not felt involved in the consultation process in their communities. They expressed discontent because the consultation, when it took place, was in their opinion held without any real

preparation or mandate²⁵. Additionally, they say that though people from each nation were consulted, there was no tour of the communities to inform people and learn everyone's point of view. Aboriginal women do not necessarily feel represented by the band councils that sign agreements with companies and the Government.

Before we can grasp how Aboriginal women see the issues of Plan Nord, we must understand that in First Nations culture, gender relations are different from those in Western societies. In Aboriginal communities, a person's status is defined above all by what responsibilities they are given. For example, a woman's status changes with age and depends on which nation she belongs to.

An Aboriginal researcher offers a good explanation of this cultural difference between the visions of Québec women and Aboriginal women:

The Aboriginal woman has traditionally fulfilled very precise functions that are essential to the proper functioning of community life. Perceived as guardians of ancestral knowledge, in terms of cultural practices, traditional medicine and biodiversity, women hold the status of being fundamental to the preservation of balance and the Aboriginal identity, essential for collective survival (Riverin, 2011: 125).

Seeing ethnicity and gender as interdependent, Aboriginal women refuse to segment their experience. They see the well-being of the Aboriginal woman as indirectly linked to that of her collectivity.

Over the last few years, Aboriginal women in Canada have assumed greater and greater responsibility in their communities, becoming so influential that recently an equal number of women and men were candidates for election to Chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Canada. Michèle Audette says she believes the inclusive approach of Aboriginal women has been a factor in their rise to power (Scofield, 2012).

3.2.2. The range of positions adopted

The views of Aboriginals on the subject of Plan Nord can be summed up in three general positions. Some of those we met say they categorically reject the development happening on the territory claimed by their nation. Others, on the contrary, believe the potential benefits of mining and energy development, for their community, are great enough to compensate for the environmental and social drawbacks, especially since the projects are governed by certain rules. Lastly, still others feel that the development underway would become acceptable if tighter rules were imposed on operators in terms of respecting the environment and their communities.

²⁵ For example, Michèle Audette lamented the fact that Plan Nord was launched without the association of which she was then President, Québec Native Women, being consulted (Audette became the President of the Native Women's Association of Canada in August 2012). As for the consultation sessions in the Aboriginal communities, she found them next to useless, since the people delegated to them participated without having received the relevant information.

This last position is the one adopted by the Innu women of Maliotenam, when in April 2012 they marched to Montréal from their reserve in Côte-Nord to denounce Plan Nord. They were protesting discrimination against Aboriginal women (related to that against Aboriginal men) and said they were marching “to build a road for our children so we can leave them a better future”. Their action followed a blockade of Route 138 directed against the Romaine project, in which they had joined with the men of the community (St-Pierre, 2012). The Innu women we met at Maliotenam said they were worried about what energy and mining development would leave for future generations. They want to leave their children a healthy living environment and a knowledge of traditional ways of life and the culture of their nation, but believe that what’s going on deprives them of that possibility²⁶.

A more nuanced position is taken by Lisa Koperqualuk, President of Saturviit Inuit Women’s Association and a member of the Kativik Environmental Quality Commission (KEQC). She considers that Impact and Benefit Agreements negotiated between companies and communities will help ensure that people in the communities benefit from mining projects. She adds that mining companies contribute to social development in many countries, and could do the same here, for example by building schools. Koperqualuk would like to see women in her community get informed about development issues and participate more in decision-making, especially since development will transform their role in the Inuit community: will they opt for a job at the mine or carry on with traditional activities like gathering small fruits?

Here is a concrete example of such agreements between mining companies and Aboriginal communities: in Schefferville, Labrador Iron Mines employs 51 local Aboriginal workers, including 23 women. They are from the Innu community of Matimekossh-Lac-John and the Naskapi community (Kawawachikamach). The Aboriginal women work in the laboratories, in prospecting and in security, and represent half of the team leaders (4 of 8). LIM praises the discipline, patience and strength of character of the Aboriginal women it employs²⁷. But not everyone is happy about such agreements: for six days in early July 2012, thirty Aboriginal men and women blocked access to the mine to denounce the prospecting around their community.

3.3. Governmental interventions

The Government will contribute to funding for road construction needed to make the territory of Plan Nord more accessible to companies, workers and tourists. The extension of Route 138 east of Natashquan, the improvement of Route 138 between Baie-Comeau and Port-Cartier, and the improvement of Route 389 are already underway.

With respect to the promotion of Plan Nord, in autumn 2011 and winter 2012 the Government conducted a tour (“Rendez-vous CAP NORD”) in 12 Québec cities and towns: Sherbrooke, Rouyn-Noranda, Saint-Georges de Beauce, Sept-Îles, Lebel-sur-Quévillon, Gatineau, Trois-Rivières, Laval, Jonquière, Rivière-du-Loup, Gaspé and Québec.

²⁶ Remarks of Élyse Vollant, organizer of the Innu women’s march to Montréal, collected by the author on July 17, 2012 during our visit to the Innu community of Maliotenam.

²⁷ Remarks of Yves Pelletier, Human Resources Director for Labrador Iron Mines, collected on September 14, 2012 by Isabelle Desbiens, Director of Research and Analysis, for the Conseil.

In May 2012 it held a Salon Plan Nord in Montréal. The initial objectives were to build awareness about business opportunities, publicize job offers, encourage inter-company meetings, entice Québec companies into northern projects, and develop the entrepreneurial culture of Québec. This last objective coincides with the Québec Entrepreneurship Strategy, launched in November 2011 by the Minister of Economic Development, Innovation and and Export Trade.

Additionally, Emploi-Québec has a job-placement website that brings together job offers from employers all across the territory of Plan Nord. Jobs offered by Hydro-Québec are presented on its own website.

Note that no particular measures have been put in place by government authorities to attract women to jobs offered by mining companies. As for efforts at the school level, a guidance counsellor at the Abitibi-Témiscamingue CÉGEP says the Ordre des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation du Québec (Québec order of guidance counsellors) tells its members to refrain from considering gender in suggesting career choice, and instead to consider only a person's characteristics and aptitudes²⁸.

3.4. Local initiatives

The regional discussion table on women's affairs for the municipality of Baie-James, created under the name of Comité Condition féminine Baie-James (CCFBJ), has organized a tour of high schools with women who work in trades like jeweller, archeologist, mine engineer and mine foreperson. The tour was carried out in collaboration with the Centre de formation professionnelle (under the Commission scolaire de la Baie-James) and Emploi-Québec.

The CCFBJ also conducted a tour of employer associations to build awareness about the benefits of employing women. It produced a DVD on traditionally masculine trades that will be presented in autumn 2012 to students in Secondary Four and Five.

Lastly, the CCFBJ has created a guide to implementing work-family reconciliation policies. The Committee oversees the application of such policies in the workplace and issues an attestation to any company that implements such a policy. A regional newspaper publicizes that achievement, and the company is recognized as "a good corporate citizen". In our view, these initiatives should serve as models, since local organizations are often the ones with the best sense of how to change mentalities in their respective communities.

Note that the local initiatives described above are not being monitored, so we have no data on how many students took part in meetings with women in non-traditional trades, nor on how many companies were made more aware of the benefits of hiring women. We have no data either on whether such initiatives result in more women working in non-traditional trades, nor on whether more girls register in non-traditional study programs. This gap in knowledge should be filled as soon as possible.

²⁸ Remarks collected on June 4, 2012 by Marie-Josée Marcoux, regional agent for Nord-du-Québec, for the Conseil.

Chapter IV

THE CHALLENGES OF PLAN NORD

Driven by investments in mines, roads, railways and hydroelectric projects, the economic development of Québec's North will generate thousands of new jobs in mining and construction. Beyond the companies doing that work, other jobs will be created among their suppliers, with spinoff effects not only for local economies but throughout Québec, especially further North. Jobs will also be created to provide consumer goods and services to a growing population in northern regions. How rapidly and to what extent this happens will of course depend on the world economy, which determines metal prices; these have been on the decline of late.

Apart from job creation, there will be collateral effects of development to deal with. Communities whose social fabric is torn by the presence of fly-in fly-out workers; young people dropping out of school to work; local services stretched to the breaking point, and housing priced out of reach; insecurity, sexual harassment... All of these collateral effects will be felt most of all by women.

Below, the Conseil sets out a number of recommendations that are aimed at ensuring, first, that women benefit equally from the positive effects of Plan Nord, in terms of jobs; and second, that foreseeable undesirable effects are averted or mitigated as far as possible.

For something on the scale of Plan Nord, with massive development unfolding over decades, gender-based analysis is crucial. In the view of the Conseil, since all these projects will come into being in large part thanks to public spending, it is essential that we recognize the very different effects they could have on women and men. Therefore, the Conseil recommends:

- 1. That Ministères that grant contracts in the context of Plan Nord perform a gender-based analysis of projects receiving public investments, taking into account the distinct realities and needs of women and men.**

4.1. Work toward balanced governance

Since women's participation in decision-making structures is a condition for successful sustainable development, the Conseil recommends:

- 2. That the Société du Plan Nord, or whatever body may replace it, provide for equal representation of women and men on its board of directors.**
- 3. That the Minister for Natural Resources ensure that women's needs, particularly in terms of training, employment and housing, are heard at the Plan Nord Partners' Table and that the Minister issue a mandate to that effect.**

4.2. Provide safe and welcoming living environments

Population growth in northern communities should be accompanied by social development in those same communities. This means developing services and facilitating the integration of people employed at mining sites, with their families, into the social fabric of these towns. When the mayors of Port-Cartier, Fermont and Chibougamau had their municipal councils adopt a family policy and a cultural policy, this was what they had in mind (Dansereau, April 2012).

The rotating presence of non-resident permanent workers on the fly-in fly-out system has consequences for local populations that receive such workers. No systematic study has been done of those consequences, but we believe the phenomenon deserves close examination. Therefore, the Conseil recommends:

- 4. That the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux study the effects on local communities of the massive hiring of non-resident permanent workers, including in particular the risks of prostitution and sexual harassment. The conclusions of this study should guide the Government in granting permits and designing assistance programs for women and communities on the territory of Plan Nord.**

To handle the influx of thousands of workers and their families, northern towns will need new streets, new housing and increased production of drinking water. Additional investments will also be needed in schools, day-care centres, policing and medical services. Substantial public investment will be required to ensure that all these services are sufficient to meet demand. In this regard, in January 2012 municipal authorities in five northern towns (Port-Cartier, Fermont, Sept-Îles, Havre-Saint-Pierre and Chibougamau) estimated at \$200 million the funding needed from the Québec Government to carry out the social development made imperative by economic growth.

In response to that request, in July 2012 the outgoing Premier announced component 4 of the Québec-Municipalities Infrastructure Program, with a \$200 million funding envelope for priority municipal development projects associated with Plan Nord (press release, July 17, 2012). While that is an appreciable investment, more will be needed to deal with the effects of rapid population growth in small communities affected by mining development. For this reason, the Conseil recommends:

- 5. That the Ministère des Affaires municipales, des Régions et de l'Occupation du Territoire ensure that communities concerned by Plan Nord that face an influx of workers, including new residents and fly-in fly-out workers, receive sufficient funds to develop municipal infrastructures concordant with their effective population growth.**
- 6. That the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux ensure that infrastructures and operating budgets for health and social services in the North are made sufficient to handle the population growth caused by the massive influx of temporary workers.**

7. **That the Ministère de la Famille ensure that day-care services in the territory covered by Plan Nord are sufficient to meet demand from newly settled families.**

4.3. Raise awareness about the importance of finishing school

The prospect of making good money by working in a mine can easily divert young people from completing their education. Both boys and girls need to be made more aware of the importance of finishing school and obtaining a diploma, to ensure their economic autonomy later on. It is also essential that companies be reminded that they have a social responsibility to refrain from encouraging young people to drop out.

The Conseil du statut de la femme sees the high drop-out rate among girls as especially worrying, in view of its implications for later life. Since girls usually drop out because of early pregnancy, it is easy to imagine how hard it will be for them to return to school with a child to take care of. Given the frequency of early pregnancy among young Cree and Inuit women (see section 2.1), this phenomenon must be taken seriously in the context of Plan Nord.

For this reason, the Conseil recommends:

8. **That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport conduct an information campaign addressed to young people, especially girls, to raise their awareness about the dangers of dropping out of school.**

4.4. Train local workers and integrate them into employment

The action plan for Plan Nord includes measures aimed at increasing the training level of northern residents and enabling them to integrate into the jobs created. Thus, the Partnership for Cree Employment, a major training project with Emploi-Québec to create 418 long-lasting jobs for Crees, has enabled 150 Crees to get a stable job after completing an individualized training plan.

In a similar vein, to identify and remedy concrete problems in the integration of Aboriginal workers, the outgoing Minister of Employment and Social Solidarity announced the formation of a Groupe des partenaires Emploi Plan Nord (Plan Nord employment partners group). One representative from each Aboriginal nation concerned (Cree, Inuit, Innu and Naskapi), plus a representative from Québec Native Women, would be invited to sit on the group. The Conseil believes that this idea is worth pursuing, and that such a group, if created, should have a mandate to consider the situation of Aboriginal women with regard to employment and to set targets for employment integration among women and men.

As well, if the Government wants to encourage Aboriginal women to take part in training programs for mining jobs, it should consider what many identified as the main reason they quit such programs: family responsibilities. These responsibilities, which prevent them from leaving the community for an extended period, would be easier to combine with training if it were offered within or at least near their communities.

By making it a little easier for Aboriginal women to complete their training, we could significantly increase their chances of obtaining employment with a mining company.

For this reason, to facilitate participation in training programs by reducing travel time, and to take full account of the cultural characteristics of local populations, the Conseil recommends:

- 9. That preparatory training for mining jobs be offered in or near Aboriginal communities that are close to mining sites offering jobs. That such training be adapted to the needs of women in northern communities, and that it lead to a Diploma of Vocational Studies, eliminating the need for Aboriginals to uproot themselves to study in the South.**

4.5. Build more housing

Lack of housing leaps out as an urgent problem in northern Aboriginal communities, particularly in Nunavik, and is the root cause of grave social problems that impact women severely. For the women in these communities to look toward future careers, they must have safe and decent living conditions; and for that, access to adequate housing is essential. For this reason, the Conseil recommends:

- 10. That the Government make the construction of housing in Aboriginal communities a priority of Plan Nord.**

At the same time, to foster a more harmonious integration of workers from the South into host communities, the Conseil recommends:

- 11. That a course on the cultural universe of Aboriginals be offered to workers at facilities near Aboriginal communities. That this course be developed in collaboration with the Aboriginal people concerned by Plan Nord.**

4.6. Promote women's employment (including entry and retention) in traditionally masculine jobs

While there is a concern for diversifying women's employment at the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, it has still not led to concrete, centralized measures to achieve that objective. For this reason, the Conseil recommends:

- 12. That the sectoral committee on mine labour adopt the objective of the Comité consultatif Femmes en développement de la main-d'œuvre (consulting committee on women in workforce development) to diversify the study and career choices of young women. That it be given a mission to integrate more women into production jobs in mining, and be required to report results.**
- 13. That the Secrétariat à la condition féminine, in conjunction with the Ministères concerned, develop a publicity campaign to encourage women to apply for jobs in construction and mining on the territory covered by Plan Nord.**

We mentioned in section 2.4.2 that construction companies were excluded from the contractual obligation program. The Conseil questions whether that exclusion is justified, and will issue a recommendation on this matter in a forthcoming opinion on the situation of women in the construction trades. As for mining companies, if they are offered public assistance in the form of tax credits rather than subsidies the implementing rules of the contractual obligation should be revised to include the mining industry. For this reason, the Conseil recommends:

- 14. That the Government extend the application of the contractual obligation program to mining companies that receive tax credits of \$100 000 or more, thus requiring that they put in place an equal access to employment program to encourage women to enter and stay in traditionally masculine trades.**

CONCLUSION

The economic and social development of Québec's northern regions, based on enhancing the territory and its natural resources, offers attractive prospects for both local communities and all Quebecers. But such development comes with potential pitfalls, possibilities for negative social impacts that must be seen ahead of time so they can be minimized.

The Conseil du statut de la femme sees Plan Nord as an excellent opportunity for the Government to examine the foreseeable impacts of a new development cycle that is certain to continue for decades. Such an examination would allow measures to be put in place to promote beneficial effects, with other measures to mitigate undesirable effects. As much as possible, the Government should take advantage of the opportunity represented by a project of such tremendous scale to try to bring about positive change in our society. There will be a very great need for labour. We should take advantage of that need to ensure that women, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, have access to skilled jobs.

In the present opinion, we have examined Plan Nord by analyzing the implications of its objectives, both for Québec as a whole and for the local populations it will directly affect. For a glimpse of the transformations that could be wrought by such development, we explored what happens in encounters between small, established local populations and mining companies that move in or rapidly expand nearby. With a survey of the regional economy, we highlighted the preponderant role of the mining industry and the presence of a strongly segregated job market. We also showed the effects of the mining boom on northern communities, due especially to rapid population growth and the increasingly frequent use of fly-in fly-out labour. People in Aboriginal communities perceive these effects sharply, for they are often close to mining and hydroelectric sites. Lastly, we analyzed the challenges of Plan Nord with regard to a series of issues: the benefits of projects, governance, the safety and security of living environments, the danger of northern youth dropping out of school, the integration of local labour into employment, and women's access to the jobs of Plan Nord.

All of this has led the Conseil to make 14 recommendations that would, in our view, promote greater participation by women in making choices for economic and social development in the North, while enabling active women to share in the benefits expected from that development. Lastly, to improve living conditions for the inhabitants of this territory, the Conseil requests that the Government pay special attention to the urgent needs of Inuit communities.

APPENDIX

LIST OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONSEIL DU STATUT DE LA FEMME

1. That Ministères that grant contracts in the context of Plan Nord perform a gender-based analysis of projects receiving public investments, taking into account the distinct realities and needs of women and men.
2. That the Société du Plan Nord, or whatever body may replace it, provide for equal representation of women and men on its board of directors.
3. That the Minister for Natural Resources ensure that women's needs, particularly in terms of training, employment and housing, are heard at the Plan Nord Partners' Table and that the Minister issue a mandate to that effect.
4. That the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux study the effects on local communities of the massive hiring of non-resident permanent workers, including in particular the risks of prostitution and sexual harassment. The conclusions of this study should guide the Government in granting permits and designing assistance programs for women and communities on the territory of Plan Nord.
5. That the Ministère des Affaires municipales, des Régions et de l'Occupation du Territoire ensure that communities concerned by Plan Nord that face an influx of workers, including new residents and fly-in fly-out workers, receive sufficient funds to develop municipal infrastructures concordant with their effective population growth.
6. That the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux ensure that infrastructures and operating budgets for health and social services in the North are made sufficient to handle the population growth caused by the massive influx of temporary workers.
7. That the Ministère de la Famille ensure that day-care services in the territory covered by Plan Nord are sufficient to meet demand from newly settled families.
8. That the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport conduct an information campaign addressed to young people, especially girls, to raise their awareness about the dangers of dropping out of school.
9. That preparatory training for mining jobs be offered in or near Aboriginal communities that are close to mining sites offering jobs. That such training be adapted to the needs of women in northern communities, and that it lead to a Diploma of Vocational Studies, eliminating the need for Aboriginals to uproot themselves to study in the South.

10. That the Government make the construction of housing in Aboriginal communities a priority of Plan Nord.
11. That a course on the cultural universe of Aboriginals be offered to workers at facilities near Aboriginal communities. That this course be developed in collaboration with the Aboriginal people concerned by Plan Nord.
12. That the sectoral committee on mine labour adopt the objective of the *Comité consultatif Femmes en développement de la main-d'œuvre* (consulting committee on women in workforce development) to diversify the study and career choices of young women. That it be given a mission to integrate more women into production jobs in mining, and be required to report results.
13. That the Secrétariat à la condition féminine, in conjunction with the Ministères concernés, develop a publicity campaign to encourage women to apply for jobs in construction and mining on the territory covered by Plan Nord.
14. That the Government extend the application of the contractual obligation program to mining companies that receive tax credits of \$100 000 or more, thus requiring that they put in place an equal access to employment program to encourage women to enter and stay in traditionally masculine trades.

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