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Nov. 27, 2003

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**Presentation by the  
Labrador Inuit Association  
to the  
Public Utilities Board  
on the  
Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro  
2003 General Rate Application**

Presented at The Labrador Friendship Centre  
Happy Valley-Goose Bay  
26 November 2003

My name is Leroy Metcalfe and I am here today on behalf of the Labrador Inuit Association or LIA. LIA represents approximately 5300 Labrador Inuit who live mainly in the communities of Nain, Hopedale, Makkovik, Postville, Rigolet and the Upper Lake Melville area, which includes Happy Valley-Goose Bay and North West River.

The LIA has sent me here today with a very simple message, but a very important one.

That message is **"Enough is Enough – No More Rate Hikes for Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro"**.

The reasons for our opposition to the general rate application are simple. Our people cannot afford to put more money into Hydro's coffers. The majority of LIA's members live on the north coast of Labrador where electricity rates and the costs of living in general are the highest in the province.

Rates are so high people cannot afford to heat their homes with electricity. In fact, most of our people, especially those residing in Nain and Hopedale rely on burning oil to heat their homes. We also pay the highest rates for home heating fuel. Typical heating bills for those burning oil range from 500 to 600 dollars per month. This, coupled with high costs of food leave our most disadvantaged struggling each month to provide basic necessities – comforts which most of you take for granted. Elders, widows, single mothers and others on fixed incomes are plagued with making decisions nobody should have to make. Decisions like "do I pay my Hydro bill or do I buy food for my children?" Decisions like "do I pay my Hydro bill, or do I put extra oil in my tank?"

On the north coast of Labrador we are faced with the longest, coldest winters. Yet, many Inuit live in old, non-energy efficient houses. With Inuit having an average income of less than 10,000 dollars per year, the rate increase requested by hydro places another weight on the shoulders of our people. That burden of coming up with more money for the same service shows no regard for our hardships. It is more like we are being kicked when we are down. We ask, why pay more for electricity? The service we get is less reliable; we can only use enough electricity to provide light and use some electricity for cooking. It is a very sad sight to watch a widow walk around Nain on a cold, damp fall morning pushing a wheel barrow, trying to scrounge enough wood to light a fire to warm her house. It is especially hard to watch that happen when you know that if Hydro rates weren't already excessive for her budget she could simply go to her thermostat and turn up her electric heat a few degrees.

Another factor we worry about when we hear about hydro rate hikes are the associated tax increases we pay to the Provincial Treasury. For example, if a household in St. John's consumes 3500 kilowatt hours, their bill to Hydro will be \$250. An additional \$37.50 flows to the Province for taxes. In Nain, if a household consumes 3500 kilowatt hours, they will pay \$412 to Hydro and an additional \$61.80 to the Province. In our opinion, we are residents of this Province, but we feel as though we are being treated unfairly. We do not know why we are expected to pay higher taxes for the same amount of service.

In closing, I ask you to put yourself in the shoes of the Labrador Inuit. Imagine for a minute that you had to choose between paying your monthly electrical bill and putting food on your family's table. Now, imagine how you would feel when the utility company asked you for more money without providing you a better service. While you are thinking about that, think about our message **"Enough is Enough – No More Rate Hikes for Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro"**.

LABRADOR INUIT ASSOCIATION

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