

## **PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION**

### **CONTEMPTUOUS COMMENTS ABOUT FIRST NATIONS: PIERRE DUFOUR MUST RESIGN**

*Wendake, May 22, 2023* - In light of the contemptuous and disgraceful comments made last week by CAQ member for Abitibi-Est Pierre Dufour, the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) is officially asking for his resignation and is urging the government to end its silence.

In an unprecedented intervention at the Val-d'Or City Council on May 15, Pierre Dufour attacked Radio-Canada's Enquête TV report, which addressed cases of abuse of Indigenous women by police officers of the Sûreté du Québec in Val-d'Or. Denigrating the report, he stated it was "full of lies" and then attacked the Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec (Viens Commission), which clearly demonstrated the existence of systemic racism in Quebec.

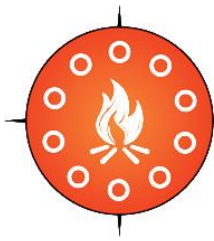
Pierre Dufour cannot simply say that his comments "went beyond his thoughts". First, what he stated is extremely insulting to those who are trying to find ways to address homelessness, crime and mental health. Worse, his comments are extremely contemptuous regarding Indigenous women who have had the courage to come forward and disclose abuse.

"With such degrading statements, Dufour sends the message that people who dare to denounce violence do not deserve to be believed, that journalists have no rigor and that experts like Judge Viens botch their work. In short, everyone is wrong, except Pierre Dufour. In truth, the only honourable thing he could do is to resign to make room for a well-intentioned and compassionate leader who finds solutions rather than causes chaos. At this point, no one has come out of the municipal council room a winner," said AFNQL Chief Ghislain Picard.

"Homelessness is not a lifestyle choice. Our women who end up on the street are victims, not criminals. What we need from the government and its members is help, not racist attacks," said Grand Chief of the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation, Savanna McGregor.

#### **The Legault government questioned**

According to the Chief of the Anishnabe Nation of Lac Simon, Lucien Wabanonik, MP Dufour is fuelling racism carried by a minority of people, which can only hurt reconciliation efforts. "Silence is consent? The question arises because the CAQ government has remained oddly silent on the offensive remarks of its member. The seriousness of the comments and the context behind them fully justify a strong intervention by Premier Legault to correct this low blow that



jeopardizes government to government relations and sets back reconciliation efforts with Indigenous peoples”, said Chief Wabanonik.

"The Premier of Quebec must clearly denounce the comments made by this member and show him the door. I have no doubt that this position will be echoed by the Anishinabe Nation and other First Nations. It is all well and good to see an advertisement promoting reconciliation from the CAQ government on TV networks and others, but it has the duty and authority to act and unite to protect the well-being and safety of all citizens, including First Nations", concluded Chief Picard, who expresses his support for the City of Val-d'Or, which is asking for Quebec's help to deal with the issue of homelessness and crime.

***About the AFNQL***

The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador is the regional political organization that brings together the 43 First Nations Chiefs of Quebec and Labrador (<https://apnql.com/>).

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**Source: Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador**

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