



MATAWA FIRST NATIONS

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Matawa First Nations Respond to Ontario's Far North Initiative

Thunder Bay, ON – Matawa First Nations today announced their preliminary support for the Ontario government's Far North Planning Initiative, which was unveiled this week. Matawa First Nations, who are not part of the Northern Table process, have continued to advocate for a new strategy in the North that effectively marries mutually beneficial resource development with the need to protect traditional lands. This announcement is considered the first step towards an improved process for the Matawa First Nations people.

"Matawa First Nations are very much in support of sustainable resource development that will directly benefit our communities on all levels," said Chief Solomon Atlookan, spokesman for Matawa First Nations. "We are however strong believers in the need to protect our lands, air and water for future generations. This involves efficient guardianship of the lands, a line of protection against aggressive third party developers, and updating the archaic Mining Act to conform to current jurisprudence regarding consultation and accommodation on Treaty rights. This initiative from Ontario is much needed and long overdue," he said.

Matawa First Nations also offer some recommendations for Ontario with respect to the initiative moving forward.





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“Matawa First Nations are not part of the Northern Table process and therefore it is essential that the Province ensures that all First Nations are consulted and accommodated throughout this process. We hold firm that consultation must take place directly with the First Nations and/or Tribal Councils, and it will not suffice to consult solely with Provincial Territorial Organizations (PTO’s) such as Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (NAN). It is often overlooked that it is only the people at the community level that have the authority to make decisions concerning their territories. This initiative must apply to all First Nations within Matawa traditional territory,” stated Chief Sol Atlookan.

He continued, “The planning process must also include the provision of financial and human resources and capacity for the First Nations to effectively participate in this initiative. Without resources and capacity, this is a meaningless exercise that will have little chance of success.”

With respect to the down payment on revenue sharing, Matawa First Nations expressed their support for the initiative with some stipulation. “The government must move quickly to flow funds for the down payment that will act as an ‘offer of good faith’ and it must be absolutely clear that the down payment does not represent the final agreement to First Nations on resource revenue sharing. This must be negotiated with all First Nations,” asserted Chief Atlookan.

Matawa First Nations are nine First Nations located throughout north-western Ontario with Tribal Council offices located in Thunder Bay.





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