



NEWS

Office of the Premier

Ontario and Matawa Member First Nations Celebrate Historic Framework for Negotiations on the Ring of Fire

Premier Joins First Nation Chiefs to Formalize Regional Framework

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April 24, 2014

Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Matawa member First Nation Chiefs were in Thunder Bay today, where they joined Matawa community members, to officially celebrate the recent signing of a landmark regional framework agreement to develop the Ring of Fire.

The Regional Framework Agreement is a first step in the historic, community-based negotiation process that will bring together the nine First Nations and the Province of Ontario to discuss and negotiate an approach for development in the First Nations' traditional territories. The process will help ensure that First Nations participate in, and benefit from, Ring of Fire developments.

The agreement ensures First Nations and Ontario can work together on resource development opportunities. That includes: long-term, regional environmental monitoring; enhanced participation in environmental assessment processes; resource revenue sharing; social and economic supports; and regional and community infrastructure.

In attendance at the ceremony were Chief Sonny Gagnon of Aroland First Nation, Chief Fred Sackaney of Constance Lake First Nation, Chief Elizabeth Atlookan of Eabametoong First Nation, Chief Celia Echum of Ginoogaming First Nation, Chief Allen Towegishig of Long Lake #58 First Nation, Chief Elijah K. Moonias of Marten Falls First Nation, Chief Peter Moonias of Neskantaga First Nation, Chief Johnny Yellowhead of Nibinamik First Nation, and Chief Cornelius Wabasse of Webequie First Nation.

Michael Gravelle, Minister of Northern Development and Mines, David Zimmer, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, and Bill Mauro, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, were also at the celebration to unveil the framework agreement, alongside Chief Georjann Morriseau of Fort William First Nation, Bob Rae, Matawa negotiator and former Premier of Ontario, and Frank Iacobucci, Ontario's negotiator and former Supreme Court of Canada judge.

The event included First Nation traditional ceremonies, a commemorative signing ceremony with Premier Wynne, and an exchange of gifts.

Investing in the development of the Ring of Fire is part of Ontario's economic plan that is creating jobs for today and tomorrow. The comprehensive plan and its six priorities focus on



Ontario's greatest strengths — its people and strategic partnerships. The Regional Negotiation Process with the nine First Nations is a very significant part of that plan.

Matawa Chiefs Council is comprised of the nine Chiefs from the Matawa member First Nations. The First Nations are located in Northern Ontario. Five of the communities are only accessible by air or winter road. Four of the First Nations are drive-in communities. The Aboriginal languages of The Peoples are dialects of Ojibway, Oji-Cree and Cree. Eight of the nine communities are beneficiaries to The James Bay Treaty, Treaty No. 9. Long Lake #58 First Nation lies within the boundaries of the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850, but was a signing location for Treaty No. 9. All nine First Nations will be impacted by resource development in the area known as the Ring of Fire.

QUOTES

“With this agreement, we have taken an important step forward together – we have adopted a different kind of negotiating process that is based on respect. We now have a framework to guide our discussions as we work toward achieving our common goals, and ensuring that everyone benefits from development in the Ring of Fire.”

— Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario

“Since the discovery of the deposits at Wawangajing (Ring of Fire), there have been many premature initiatives, from the continuing, and much-maligned, railroad corridor, to the proposed slurry pipelines through the muskeg sponge. Our two winter protests, which highlighted the lack of consultation, were designed to slow down the ideas and take stock in reality. The MOU our First Nation has with Ontario is aimed at achieving involvement with the individual FN, and the Regional Framework is an extension of that effort to include others in the surrounding proposed development area. As I have mentioned before, many MOUs, DPIs and frameworks have come and gone, with the most distressing demise having been the dismantling of the Indian Commission of Ontario in 2005 by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Currently there is no instrument to conduct tri-level talks, but there is no question about the need for trilateral discussions for development in the Ring of Fire. I believe our local MOU and the Regional Framework provide the window for that.”

— Chief Elijah K. Moonias, Marten Falls First Nation

“This regional framework agreement is a tremendous achievement that represents a significant step forward in our community based regional negotiation process. I am incredibly proud that our collaborative work with Matawa-member First Nations continues to progress and we continue to make important advancements on regional, environmental, and economic developments.”

— Michael Gravelle, Minister of Northern Development and Mines

“This ceremony today demonstrates good will on the part of the Premier and the Chiefs for the negotiations we are entering into. The negotiations under this framework will complement the



essential direct negotiations Webequie is having with the Province of Ontario on a range of issues related to the Ring of Fire. Success in both of these negotiations will chart a course for a different future for all of us. It is now time for the real work to begin and we look forward to working with Ontario and our fellow First Nations.

— Chief Cornelius Wabasse, Webequie First Nation

“Improving the quality of life and creating lasting economic benefits for First Nations communities is a priority for this government. This regional framework demonstrates how respectful dialogue, negotiation and collaboration can move economic development projects forward, creating benefits for everyone involved.”

— David Zimmer, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs

“This framework demonstrates that our First Nations are open for development that is sustainable and respects our lands. I want to affirm our commitment to our current agreements and understandings with other parties and other First Nations as we move forward on this regional process with Ontario.”

— Chief Sonny Gagnon, Aroland First Nation

“Within this framework, the goals and hopes of the Matawa-member First Nations, of all northerners, and in fact, of the people of Ontario, are linked in an intrinsic way. Not just for today, but for generations to come.”

— Bill Mauro, MPP, Thunder Bay-Atikokan

“The regional framework is not about selling our land, but sharing our land as our Elders envisioned for the benefit of all. Nibinamik First Nation understands the importance of balance between economic development that is required to ensure community growth and productivity, and the need to sustain cultural values and beliefs, particularly as related to the land. We are very happy to have participated in today’s ceremonies.”

— Chief Johnny Yellowhead, Nibinamik First Nation

“The RFA is a positive step. It is historic, and it has been a challenging process to develop. We have spent considerable effort over the last year to have productive conversations about resource stewardship on our lands. Our community has given us a strong mandate to negotiate with the Province on these important issues. We can’t passively hope that others will care for us. This is something that we have to go out and work for. I expect the Province to demonstrate their commitment to our community based process. This is the only way we can consider what sort of future our people want to work towards.”

— Chief Elizabeth Atlookan, Eabametoong First Nation

“Our community members, both on and off reserve, will be very engaged in this process. Our neighbours in Greenstone and the entire Northern Ontario region should be pleased that we now have a process. This is a milestone for everyone in Ontario and it was important to have ceremonies today to mark that milestone.”



— Chief Allen Towegishig, Long Lake #58 First Nation

“I am so proud to stand with our nine Chiefs today. Many of my community members are here as well. Those who could attend today, and those members back home, have been waiting a long time to have meaningful negotiations with Ontario. This is just the beginning.”

— Chief Fred Sackaney, Constance Lake First Nation

“I’m glad to be here with my fellow Chiefs to take part in this important event. My community and I have worked hard to get to this day. It is important to note that we have continued to maintain our community position that we must have a government-to-government relationship in order to move forward. This signing signifies the willingness for First Nations and Ontario to establish a government-to-government relationship that includes discussions on revenue sharing and joint decision making that will allow our communities to become self-sufficient.”

— Chief Peter Moonias, Neskantaga First Nation

“I want to thank all my First Nation members. We have worked really hard at the community level to get where we are today. I am happy that we have community members here to participate in this important ceremony. This is just the beginning of much more work and planning that needs to be addressed, especially in terms of health and social wellness, and infrastructure. I look forward to working with our Chiefs and with Ontario as we move forward on these issues.”

— Chief Celia Echum, Ginoogaming First Nation

QUICK FACTS

- The Ring of Fire, located 540 kilometres northeast of Thunder Bay, is one of the most significant mineral regions in the province.
- The Ring of Fire has mineral potential known to be worth \$60 billion and includes the largest deposit of chromite ever discovered in North America. Chromite is a key ingredient of stainless steel.
- The Ring of Fire also holds the potential for significant production of nickel, copper and platinum.
- In July 2013, [Ontario appointed the Honourable Frank Iacobucci](#) as the lead negotiator for Ontario to participate in discussions with the Matawa-member First Nations on proposed resource development in the Ring of Fire.
- In November 2013, Ontario announced that it would lead the [creation of a development corporation](#) to bring together private and public partners, including key mining companies, First Nations, and the provincial and federal governments, to lead strategic infrastructure development for the Ring of Fire region.
- Development in the Ring of Fire is subject to all necessary environmental assessment and regulatory processes, and fulfillment of the Crown’s duty to consult.

LEARN MORE



Find out how the Ring of Fire is part of the [Growth Plan for Northern Ontario](#)

[Read more about the Ring of Fire](#)

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