

MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL NOON, FRIDAY, JUNE 9, 2017

Friday, June 9, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AGOKE DEVELOPMENT LIMITED PARTNERSHIP CALL FOR SUPPORT FOR THE INTERIM MANAGEMENT OF THE OGOKI FOREST

THUNDER BAY, ON: After two years in development, officials from the Agoke Development Limited Partnership (ADLP) announced today that they are continuing efforts to secure a meaningful role within Canada's Indigenous forestry sector within the Ogoki Forest in Ontario, Canada, calling for support for their business plan for interim management.

The ADLP is a result of a [co-operation agreement](#) signed on March 27, 2015 by Aroland, Eabametoong and Marten Falls First Nations (members of Matawa First Nations Management) to work together in obtaining a long-term forest license for the Ogoki Forest. ADLP was incorporated on September 14, 2015. The forest is located 400 km north-east of Thunder Bay immediately east of the Wabakimi Provincial Park and is approximately 10,900 km² in size. It is in the traditional territories of these First Nations within James Bay Treaty No. 9.

ADLP officials met today to discuss their steadfast approach towards their goal. It included a discussion with a forestry company operating within the Ogoki Forest to discuss the implications from the recent U.S. tariffs on Canadian softwood exports and the \$867M federal aid package for the softwood lumber industry announced on June 1, 2017.

Since its incorporation, ADLP has made strides in working towards their goal by securing a Forest Resource (FR) license to harvest fibre currently moving to the Longlac Lumber Inc. sawmill and are looking at other opportunities. It has also successfully managed and administered provincial road funding. Currently, it is in discussions with regional consuming mills to identify wood flow.

As a FR licensee, ADLP is active in the forest management planning process through its input in the selection of harvest blocks during the preparation of the Ogoki Forest 2017-2018 Annual Work Schedule and is working on a plan to restart the sawmill in Nakina that could bring long-term economic development to the region.

Having met with Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry Minister McGarry on March 7, 2017, the ADLP is currently seeking an interim arrangement while they proceed with developing a new management model that includes taking the lead on the development the next 10-year plan for the Ogoki Forest as the main proponent. They have prepared a business plan that lays out the strategy to this effect. They also plan on taking advantage of additional provincial and federal

government supports that are available to fix roads/bridges and loan guarantees available to mitigate international tariffs placed by the U.S. government on softwood lumber exports.

Given Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne’s recent update on ‘The Journey Together: Ontario’s Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples,’ which commits to “engaging with Indigenous partners on approaches to enhance participation in the resource sector by improving the way resource benefits are shared” (amongst other commitments), the ADLP remain hopeful that the proposal will be met positively by Minister McGarry.

Premier Wynne’s September 2016 mandate letter to Minister McGarry also included a mandate to: “continue to work with forestry companies, environmental organizations, First Nations and community representatives to ensure that Crown forest resources are being put to their best use — and in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable fashion.”

The ADLP concluded their meeting today with solidified plans on next steps.

QUOTES

“Agoke Development Limited Partnership intends to take a lead role in forest management for the Ogoki Forest. This includes forest management planning, harvesting, road construction, forest renewal, and monitoring, recognizing that there may be supportive partners like forestry companies and investors involved in these activities.”

—*Mark Bell, President, Agoke Development Limited Partnership*

“We are prepared to roll-out our business plan to get this done. The government of Ontario needs to make the Ogoki Forest a priority as it has been dormant for years. Our First Nations have an 80-90% unemployment rate and the Ogoki Forest can change that significantly. We propose this as a solution and as an opportunity for reconciliation.”

—*Jason Rasevych, Economic Development Advisor, Matawa (Interim General Manager, Agoke Development Limited Partnership)*

— 30 —

For more information, please contact Carol Audet, Communications Manager – Matawa First Nations at (807) 632-9663 or by email at caudet@matawa.on.ca.

Matawa First Nations Management is a Tribal Council providing a variety of advisory services and programs to 8 Ojibway and Cree First Nations in James Bay Treaty No. 9 and 1 First Nation in the Robinson-Superior Treaty area. Follow them on Facebook or Twitter @MatawaFN

