



CHIEFS COUNCIL

March 25, 2015

MEDIA RELEASE

MATAWA CHIEFS OPPOSE NORONT'S PURCHASE OF CLIFFS ASSETS, AND LACK OF ENGAGEMENT ON ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

THUNDER BAY ON – MARCH 25, 2015: Matawa First Nation Chiefs re-affirmed their commitment to a community based processes for Ring of Fire Development, including creating environmental protections and economic opportunities which are driven by their community members, not just industry plans.

The recent purchase announcement by Noront goes against the Matawa First Nations Unity Declaration signed in Webequie First Nation July 13, 2011. The Chiefs have repeatedly signalled that genuine partnership in development will be the only way forward in the Ring of Fire, and Noront seems intent on driving its agenda, rather than working together.

The Matawa Chiefs are examining legal and political options on both the purchase agreement and the rumored advancing of the Environmental Assessment process beyond the draft Terms of Reference phase. These moves are seen as a barrier to future opportunities with the First Nations as well as threatening Aboriginal and Treaty Rights. The Chiefs were informed of the deal at the same time as the public, and while negotiating the next steps on an enhanced environmental assessment.

Chief Peter Moonias outlined the key reasons why the Chiefs are frustrated with Noront, “the Cliffs chromite is on our lands, we have jurisdiction here as well as Aboriginal Title and Treaty rights in the lands that hold the Cliffs chromite. We entered into the Framework Agreement with Ontario to work together as governments, not to give special status to a company and let them carry on in our Lands. Our rights in the chromite deposits are recognized by the fact that the province and mining companies have already made promises to share revenues and benefits from the development. We should have a voice in the sale.”

Chief Elizabeth Atlookan said, “We clearly understand that Noront, with their investors, and the Provincial Government are all seeking stability and certainty in the region. In reality, they want the appearance of partnership with our First Nations, but don't demonstrate any interest in really working together to shape the future of our region... It is frustrating that you have a company like this which receives a PDAC award for environmental and social responsibility, yet continues to avoid real discussions and partnership on the Environmental Assessment for their project.”





CHIEFS COUNCIL

The Matawa Chiefs are well-aware that private investors are most interested in a stable and secure investment, and that none of the proposed projects will receive financing for development without the support of the First Nations.

“Our people signed the Treaty to share resources, but so far, our communities have not seen any sharing from Noront” said Chief Johnny Yellowhead, Nibinamik First Nation. “This is Matawa Territory and Ancestral lands and without delay we have Free Prior and Informed Consent, and they are buying and selling it and we are not yet gaining direct benefits from it”. Any purchase of the Cliffs assets without First Nations involvement in decision making is not acceptable in this day and age.

Chief Sonny Gagnon of Aroland First Nation commented, “If Noront was really interested in being a genuine partner with us, they would have consulted with our First Nation on the EA Terms of Reference in a way that our community members understood, as well as purchasing the Cliffs Assets with our First Nations as true economic partners. None of our communities benefited from this sale – that is 22 million, on top of all the 500 million which Cliffs spent in their initial investment”.

The Terms of Reference on the Environmental Assessment for the Eagle’s Nest Project, submitted by Noront, is a multi-volume document that has not been developed in partnership with any of the Matawa First Nations, even though most have submitted extensive comments on the shortcomings of the document. “Our First Nation requested funding from Noront to review the Terms of Reference, but they were not given any resources to review these complicated documents, and we’ve had to pay for legal review out of other much-needed community funds. Furthermore, the majority of Bay Street investors recognize our clear rights and jurisdiction over these lands. They know that we have a say in any development here – there is effectively a two-tiered system where we should be working at a government-to-government level and with industry, but this company doesn’t seem to get it,” said Fred Sackaney, Chief of Constance Lake First Nation.

There is a lack of respect towards our First Nations. You can’t be negotiating an Environmental Assessment with Ontario as part of the Regional Framework Agreement and then give one company a pass. “Our First Nations went into the Regional Framework in good faith but we are not seeing that by Ontario which is pushing us” said interim Chief Bruce Achneepineskum, Marten Falls First Nation.

All the Matawa First Nations Chiefs have repeatedly said, “No Development will happen in our lands unless we are a part of it in genuine partnership”.





CHIEFS COUNCIL

For more information contact:

Chief Sonny Gagnon, Aroland First Nations – Cell: (807) 620-7195 Band Office: (807) 329-5970

Chief Elizabeth Atlookan, Eabametoong First Nation –Band Office: (807) 242-7221

Chief Fred Sackaney, Constance Lake First Nation Cell: (705) 372-8023 Band Office: (705) 463-4511

Chief Celia Echum, Ginoogaming First Nation– Cell: (807) 854-8940 Band Office: (807) 876-2422

Interim Chief Bruce Achneepineskum, Marten Falls First Nation– Cell: (807) 630-1843 Band Office: (807) 349-2509

Chief Peter Moonias, Neskantaga First Nation– Cell: (807) 621-3611 Band Office: (807) 479-2570

Chief Johnny Yellowhead, Nibinamik First Nation– Cell: (807) 630-6005 Band Office: (807) 593-2131

Chief Allen Towegishig, Long Lake #58 First Nation– Cell: (807) 853-5959 Band Office: (807) 876-2292

Matawa First Nations Management (MFNM) is a Tribal Council that provides advisory and support services to its nine guiding member First Nations in Northern Ontario.

Matawa Chiefs Council is comprised of the Chiefs from the nine First Nations.

Position on Development. The First Nations that guide Matawa First Nation Management agree that their people must receive maximum benefits from resource development in their territories, and that the development must be sustainable, responsible, and undergo an appropriate environmental assessment. They also maintain they must be consulted and accommodated throughout the development including the granting of claims and early exploration. The

First Nations signed a Unity Declaration in July 2011 underscoring their commitment to work together to achieve their common goals.

Resource Development in Matawa Member First Nation Territories. All of the **Matawa** member First Nations are experiencing an unprecedented increase in early exploration and mining activities in their territories. One area that has become a focal point is the Ring of Fire. ROF is the name given to a mineral rich area situated in First Nation traditional territories around Northern Ontario. The proposed developments, Black Thor and Eagles Nest, are on the Muketi River. All nine Matawa member First Nations will be impacted by the ROF development and/or associated infrastructure. It is only one area where resource development is advancing in First Nation territories.

