



CHIEFS COUNCIL

MATAWA CHIEFS COUNCIL MATAWA FIRST NATIONS MANAGEMENT

**WRITTEN SUBMISSION TO THE:
STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS
RE: PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS 2020**

**TUESDAY JANUARY 21, 2020
THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO**





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INTRODUCTION

The Matawa Chiefs Council are submitting this written document to the Ontario Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs as part of the presentation made on Tuesday January 21, 2020 in Thunder Bay, Ontario related to the Ontario Pre-Budget Consultations 2020.

ACKNOWLEDGING CHALLENGES IN ONTARIO'S ECONOMY

The economy of Ontario is important and there are long and short-term challenges ahead for the province of Ontario. The Ontario government has outlined an 'Open for Business' platform to stimulate the economy in many business, industry and resource sectors across the province; and it is this focus and public discussion on the Ontario economy that Matawa member First Nations have an interest.

It is the intention of Matawa First Nations to provide constructive comments on how First Nations and Ontario can move forward together.

NORTHERN AND REMOTE FIRST NATION REALITIES

Matawa First Nations families and members face the reality of *higher* costs of living, *higher* costs of program and service delivery, and *higher* infrastructure and housing building costs as a constant consideration for living in the north and remote First Nations of Ontario.

Economic planning in all aspects of development must reflect the true cost of the remote north and northern realities. While the government of Ontario discusses the finances and economic affairs of the province with its constituents, the economic challenges of Matawa member First Nations cannot be ignored.

Current Costs in Eabametoong First Nation – January 2020

| | |
|---------------------|---------|
| 1 Dozen Eggs | \$5.60 |
| 1 Loaf of Bread | \$5.00 |
| 1 Loaf of Rye Bread | \$7.40 |
| 4 L Bag of Milk | \$15.05 |
| 4 Kg Bag of Sugar | \$16.45 |
| 1 L of Gasoline | \$2.20 |

* Additional figure \$3.06 / L in Webequie First Nation

*Neskantaga First Nation \$2.69 / L





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NORTHERN AND REMOTE FIRST NATION PRIORITIES

- Work to date by Matawa member First Nations has been to address the comprehensive well-being of our First Nation members and communities that include social, health, education, employment and training requirements.
- Infrastructure in our communities such as housing, schools, access to fresh and safe water, and broadband internet are priorities.
- Our First Nation members also have expectations related to our inherent aboriginal and treaty rights, and the issue of free, prior and informed consent that are part of our legitimate history and perspectives as a people.
- Matawa First Nations have also held the position that our First Nation communities must also benefit from the development that will occur in our homelands.

THE EMERGING NORTHERN ECONOMY

The rationale for presenting to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs is to state the connection between *land – treaty – revenue*. The Matawa First Nations have worked to actively monitor and assess the scale of potential development of our homelands.

The preliminary estimate of \$60 billion related to the development of the Ring of Fire has been referenced and debated. The true potential of the development of the North of Ontario may perhaps be in the trillions of dollars and must be considered in its full potential for wealth creation and revenue generation that will benefit First Nations, government and industry as a whole.

The development of the north will be multi-generational and international in scope. Certainty from First Nations is the key to the emerging northern economy.

As such, the development of the north in Ontario must include equitable partnerships on a government-to-government basis between First Nations and the province of Ontario.

Matawa First Nations **are not** opposed to development; however, First Nations require a seat at the table. First Nations must be equitable partners with Ontario to deliver certainty for investment and development in the North. The basis of this partnership is recognition of Ontario's Crown obligations, a government-to-government relationship that must be established and a willingness to address our mutual interests and concerns.





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MATAWA FIRST NATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE

The Matawa First Nations recommend to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to advise or report to the Ontario legislature that:

1. The Province of Ontario consider Matawa member First Nations as equitable partners and develop a comprehensive approach to wealth creation and revenue generation.
2. Discussions on a government-to-government basis must include timeframes for specific deliverables and points of agreement to advance the Matawa member First Nation and Ontario economies forward.
3. The current realities of the north and remote First Nations must be a priority to be addressed and that any economic plans are designed to produce immediate and tangible improvements in the quality of life and reduce the high cost of living for our First Nation families and members. This must be a joint effort and priority of First Nations and the government of Ontario for development of the north and the emerging northern economy.

WRITTEN SUBMISSION AND PRESENTATION LIMITED TO BRIEF PRESENTATION

The points raised here with respect to the Ontario Pre-Budget Consultations 2020 are not the full-scope of issues related to the interests of Matawa member First Nations and the emerging northern economy. The written submission and presentation by the Matawa Chiefs Council and Matawa First Nations Management are only within the context of responding to this opportunity to provide a very brief and broad presentation and do not signify the acceptance of Ontario government's terminology or consultation approaches or legislative framework.

In addition,

- The Matawa Chiefs and Matawa First Nations represent 9 First Nations and respect the autonomy of each member First Nation.
- This statement is without prejudice to the positions Long Lake #58 First Nation takes, or may take, on the issue of whether Long Lake #58 First Nation is a party to any Treaty.
- The Matawa Chiefs Council reserves the right to re-assess and further its positions on this important issue.





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THE MATAWA FIRST NATIONS INFORMATION BACKGROUNDER

The Matawa Chiefs Council and Matawa First Nations Management represent the nine (9) First Nation communities of Aroland, Constance Lake, Eabametoong, Ginoogaming, Long Lake # 58, Marten Falls, Neskantaga, Nibinamik and Webequie First Nations. Five First Nations are remote air-access only, and four First Nations have year-round all-weather road-access.

Matawa First Nations traditional territory and homelands encompass areas of major potential mining deposits including the Ring of Fire that was discovered in 2008. The Matawa Chiefs Council view the potential development in our region within a national, provincial and regional context; specific to ensuring the best outcomes for the Matawa First Nations.

The Matawa Chiefs Council is pro-active in monitoring proposals and options for development that will bring benefits to our First Nations. Our Chiefs Council has implemented a substantial process of information collection, policy analysis and regular Chiefs Council briefings related to both the federal and provincial governments' approach to First Nations participation, negotiations and consultation that will inform the potential for development in the Matawa Region and the Far North of Ontario in general.

The Matawa Region has recently been identified by mining industry comments to media as a potential 'mining district'. The Matawa Chiefs Council understand that the development of the North is indeed a multi-generational economic opportunity for First Nations, Ontario and Canada.

Based on existing and continuously emerging information – the Matawa Chiefs Council understands that there will be permanent, significant and cumulative impacts to the Matawa traditional territory and homelands as a result of development and specifically mining-related development in our region.

In this context of substantial background information, the Matawa Chiefs Council take this opportunity to clarify that it is our unified position that Matawa First Nations have expectations for the meaningful, First Nations driven and First Nations inclusive partnerships that will be required for the sustainable and responsible development of our homelands. Self-determination and self-sufficiency are key components of this unified position.

