



CHIEFS COUNCIL

July 28, 2020

The Honourable John Yakabuski
Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
Whitney Block 6th Flr Room 6630
99 Wellesley Street W.
Toronto, ON M7A 1W8

Via Email: john.yakabuski@ontario.ca

**RE: MATAWA MEMBER FIRST NATIONS ISSUES RELATED TO FORESTRY
(REVOKE MNR-75 AND DRAFT FOREST SECTOR STRATEGY INCLUDING
PROPOSED RESOURCE REVENUE SHARING) AND THE FAR NORTH ACT, 2010**

Dear Minister Yakabuski;

The Matawa Chiefs Council is aware of the significant changes that have been adopted by the Ontario government with respect to your ministry and forest management via ERO 019-0961 *Proposed amendments to General Regulation 334 under the Environmental Assessment Act to remove Regulatory Duplication of Forest Management Requirements in Ontario* decision published on June 30, 2020.

The MNR's decision in conjunction with the Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks has occurred without any significant or meaningful engagement of the Matawa member First Nations, nor the input of our technicians and impacted community forestry operations. Ontario's hands-off approach to discussions with First Nations and opting instead to only proceed with forestry roundtables in urban centres, form letters and notices via the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) is unacceptable.

THE REVOKING OF MNR-75

The revoking of MNR-75 that has been achieved by your government's decision does impact the Inherent Aboriginal and Treaty Rights of the Matawa member First Nations as it includes the topics of:

- Public and aboriginal consultation
- Issue resolution process for a Forest Management Plan
- Road Locations and Use Management Strategies – Primary, Branch and Operational Roads
- Protecting Aboriginal Values – Report on Protection of Identified Aboriginal Values

- Regional Advisory Committees
- Provincial Forest Policy Committee
- Provincial Forest Technical Committee; and
- Negotiations with Aboriginal Peoples

All of these items should have been discussed and formally engaged with our First Nations.

The most significant impact of this government activity will also be on the future forest management units and plans related to what is termed by Ontario as the 'Far North'; but is in fact the land and territory subject to James Bay Treaty # 9 and the territory and homelands of the Matawa member First Nations.

ONTARIO'S DRAFT FOREST SECTOR STRATEGY MAINTAINING 'STATUS QUO'

Of additional concern is the MNRF's opting to maintain the 'status quo' position in relation to *A Blueprint for Success: Ontario's Forest Sector Strategy DRAFT*. It is the position of the Matawa Chiefs Council that our communities have an economic interest ahead of any other Indigenous groups (for example Metis) in the development of Ontario's forestry sector. Discussions going forward must reflect an 'equal and significant partnership'.

Forestry Access Road Infrastructure

It is also essential to note from the draft strategy the section on 'Making Strategic Investments in Forest Access Roads'. It is the position of the Matawa Chiefs Council that forestry access road infrastructure requires the consent, participation and planning of the Matawa member First Nations as they will become the future all-season roads to access the resources of our territory and lands. We must also address the issues of non-Indigenous or non-Matawa members usage of the access roads will be permitted, monitored and authorized.

Proposed Resource Revenue Sharing with Indigenous Communities

At this point, MNRF's mention in its draft strategy of 'resource revenue sharing with Indigenous communities' is premature. These discussions and negotiations will require a formal framework and financial resources to consider this option, develop alternative options, and the handing over of a template agreement is not acceptable.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE 'REVISED' FAR NORTH ACT, 2010

As the Matawa Chiefs Council have recently been informed by Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) that discussions have been held between NAN and MNRF related to the proposed revisions planned on the *Far North Act, 2010*.

It is the position of the Matawa Chiefs Council that direct discussions will be required with the MNRF. Nishnawbe Aski Nation is not mandated to determine or negotiate the Inherent Aboriginal and Treaty Rights and the interests of our Matawa member First



Nations. In addition, the MNRF must be aware that the Matawa Chiefs Council have opposed the *NAN/Ontario Treaty Relationship Agreement* signed in April 2018.

The current activities on the *Far North Act, 2010* between MNRF and NAN will require the full consideration of the Matawa member First Nations and the Matawa Chiefs Council.

In closing, the Matawa Chiefs Council state that the contents of this letter is not to be considered or referenced as consultation or an endorsement of any of Ontario's activities related to forestry, resource revenue sharing and the *Far North Act, 2010*. No financial resources have been provided to Matawa Chiefs Council or Matawa First Nations Management (MFNM) for the review, analysis or preparation of this response. This letter also acknowledges the autonomy of the Matawa member First Nations including the positions of the communities in relation to existing projects or future developments, treaty and any court proceedings now or in the future.

Sincerely,
MATAWA CHIEFS COUNCIL



David Paul Achneepineskum,
Chief Executive Officer

cc: *Nishnawbe Aski Nation Chiefs*
Nishnawbe Aski Nation Tribal Councils
Regional Chief Rosanne Archibald, Chiefs of Ontario
Minister Jeff Yurek, Environment, Conservations and Parks
Minister Greg Rickford, Indigenous Affairs
Premier Doug Ford, Ontario
Her Honour the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, OC, OOnt

