

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MATAWA ISSUES CALL FOR CANADA TO ESTABLISH REGIONAL AND FIRST NATION PARTNERSHIPS AS NORTHERN ONTARIO FIRST NATIONS MAY HOLD THE PURSE STRINGS OF CANADA AND ONTARIO'S COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND SECURITY

THUNDER BAY, ON: Matawa First Nations Management (MFNM) CEO David Paul Achneepineskum today presented to the Thunder Bay-Superior North and Thunder Bay-Rainy River ridings online virtual panel on the 2021 federal pre-budget consultations. Mr. Achneepineskum presented a reasonable and progressive outline of areas for the Government of Canada to invest in regional and local member First Nation priorities and interests and called on Canada to establish partnerships with the Matawa member First Nations on the development of the north and the Ring of Fire. In his brief presentation, he made the following statement:

"Matawa member First Nations understand that the development of the north in Ontario is of global and national importance to the economic recovery and security of Canada and Ontario in a post-COVID-19 world. The beneficiaries of James Bay Treaty No. 9 may be holding the purse strings of Canada and Ontario's significant accumulated and accelerating debt being incurred due to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Collaboration, negotiations and investments by Canada in partnership with First Nations will be required in order to prepare for the globally significant and truly world-class mining district that is expected to emerge from within the Matawa homelands and traditional territory."

As part of this very brief presentation opportunity, Achneepineskum highlighted components of the Matawa comprehensive written submission on the following specific points (in no particular order):

1. The Minister of Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, the Honourable Carolyn Bennett be designated the lead federal Minister to work alongside Matawa member First Nations on the development of Northern Ontario's 'storehouse' of natural resources that is James Bay Treaty No. 9.
2. The role of the Crown of Canada and the Minister responsible for Indigenous-Crown Relations must be more transparent as our treaty partner.
3. Canada's commitment to begin this process would be a substantial legacy for Matawa member First Nations - and all Canadians - on our joint efforts towards reconciliation and forging a new path forward for Indigenous-Crown relations.
4. Collaboration and investments are required by Canada's federal departments to support Matawa member First Nations and other northern Ontario First Nations in priority areas related to:
 - Regional infrastructure and economic opportunity investments; and
 - Planning for the tangible improvements to Matawa member First Nation quality of life, high cost of living, and lack of services currently delivered on-reserve; and
 - Regional and local financial management supports and investment planning; and

- Strategic regional education, employment and training initiatives related to supporting First Nations communities and industry partners to prepare for specific and specialized job opportunities; and
- Regional ecological and environmental initiatives that ensure the best science and technology are used in the remote north.

The Matawa Chiefs Council have consistently advocated for a regional economic approach that includes the interests and participation of Matawa member First Nations as equity partners with government, industry and investors in the potential opportunities and world-class mining district that is anticipated across northern Ontario including the Ring of Fire chromite deposit.

In the 2021 federal pre-budget consultations, the Government of Canada asked for ideas, feedback, and a vision for how this next budget can best support Canadians through the pandemic and help the country build back better. As local MPs, Minister Hajdu and MP Powlowski wanted to hear how Budget 2021 can best accommodate the unique needs of Northwestern Ontario.

— 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.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- The Matawa Chiefs Council and Matawa First Nations Management (MFNM) has nine (9) member First Nations and respects the autonomy of each member First Nation.
- The land Ontario refers to as the *Far North* is predominantly land subject to the James Bay Treaty # 9 (1905-06 and 1929-30).
- The issues are complex, consistently changing and the Matawa Chiefs Council and Matawa First Nations Management (MFNM) reserve the right to assess and reassess their positions and information stated as development unfolds.
- 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.
- In 2011 the Matawa Chiefs Council adopted the [Mamow-Wecheekapawetahteewin Unity Declaration](#) which clearly states the intention of our leadership and member First Nations to stand together to ensure that the rights and interests of our nation are protected from any unjustified infringement upon our Aboriginal, Treaty and Custodial rights as First Nations, including an active role in the decision-making and consent required for development to proceed.

