

*MEDIA RELEASE*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **MATAWA CALLS ON CANADA TO ESTABLISH A 'MATAWA/CANADA NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT TABLE' FOR ECONOMIC PROSPERITY THAT BENEFITS ALL CANADIANS INCLUDING FIRST NATIONS IN BUDGET 2022**

**[Thunder Bay, ON]** – As the Government of Canada is carrying out its 2022 pre-budget consultations across the country, the Matawa First Nations Management (MFNM) delivered a written submission to the Thunder Bay – Superior North MP Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and Thunder Bay – Rainy River MP Marcus Powlowski offices calling on Canada to begin the collaboration, negotiations and investment process - in partnership with Matawa member First Nations - to maximize the benefits of the development of the north. The written submission stated that:

- The Minister of Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, the Honourable Marc Miller 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. Specific recommendation for the establishment of a *Matawa/Canada Northern Development Table*.
- The role of the Crown of Canada, the Prime Minister and the Minister responsible for Indigenous-Crown Relations must be more transparent as our Treaty partner. The primary Treaty relationship is between Canada and its representatives and the Matawa member First Nations; the demands of Ontario and the mining industry are secondary.
- Matawa First Nations Management (MFNM) recommends that Canada commit to ongoing funding for this activity as part of Matawa member First Nations re-establishing our governance over our lands and resources. Canada needs to fund First Nations to be actively involved not just when Canada is considering changes or adding new regulations. As a Treaty partner - First Nations must be funded to ensure equitable decision-making processes in this new era of partnerships and regional development.
- Economic recovery "... that benefits all Canadians..."<sup>1</sup> must include the Matawa member First Nations as equal and joint partners in development, enabling investor certainty and participation in the emerging new northern Ontario economy from within the Matawa traditional territories and homelands.
- 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.
- The Matawa Chiefs Council are assessing the proposed draft Agreement between Canada and Ontario for the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) Regional Assessment for the Ring of Fire, and the current approach to exclude Matawa member First Nations as a recognized Treaty partner and potential 'Indigenous governing body' to have a directing and decision-making role alongside Canada and Ontario is unacceptable. Canada and Ontario's maneuvering on the Regional Assessment is the start of the failure of promises made to Indigenous Rights Holders under Bill C-69 (Royal Assent, 2019) to overhaul the environmental legislation of Canada as well as the upcoming implementation of Bill C-15 the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Royal Assent, 2021).

As part of its own internal work to date on the development of the north and the emerging new northern Ontario economy, the Matawa Chiefs Council, Matawa First Nations Management Board of Directors, CEO and staff have continued to identify and work on the priority areas such as:

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/programs/consultations/2022/pre-budget-consultations.html>

- ✓ 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
- ✓ Significant capacity building within the Matawa region in health, health co-op, physician and nursing services, and child welfare and family supports within the MFNM organization and programs/services umbrella; 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.

## QUOTES

“The Matawa Chiefs Council have consistently stated the position that the development of the North including the Ring of Fire mineral deposit will require the participation of our people of the Matawa First Nations, the governments of Canada and Ontario, industry and investors to maximize the potential multi-generational benefits that are anticipated.” says David Paul Achneepineskum, CEO of Matawa “Now is the time for Canada to demonstrate its commitment to reconciliation and the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in its approach to its relationship with the Matawa First Nations, Canada’s economic recovery and major project development.”

– *David Paul Achneepineskum, CEO, Matawa First Nations Management*

## 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).
- Matawa First Nations Management and Matawa Chiefs Council consists of nine (9) member First Nations of Aroland, Constance Lake, Eabametoong, Ginoogaming, Long Lake # 58, Marten Falls, Neskantaga, Nibinamik and Webequie First Nations. Five (5) First Nations are remote, and four (4) First Nations have road access. The current population of Matawa First Nations is over 10,000 people.
- 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.

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

