



Nibinamik First Nation
General Delivery
Summer Beaver, ON P0T 3B0

MEDIA STATEMENT

April 17, 2019

For Immediate Release

NIBINAMIK FIRST NATION OPPOSES ONTARIO'S UNILATERAL PROPOSED REPEAL OF THE FAR NORTH ACT

Summer Beaver, ON: Responding to the Government of Ontario's February 25, 2019 announcement of a proposed repeal of the *Far North Act*, 2010, Nibinamik First Nation Chief and Council offered the following statement:

“Nibinamik has significant concerns with any proposal that would remove environmental protections from the north, curtail our inherent rights of self-government and jurisdiction, and significantly impact our stewardship responsibilities over our traditional territory. We are strongly opposed to the unilateral and indifferent manner in which Ontario is proceeding with this review and proposal. Ontario cannot repeal protections for our lands and run roughshod over our constitutionally-protected rights in the name of development and efficiency. It is critical that any decisions that has the potential to affect our rights, responsibilities, and territory must be made in deep partnership and collaboration with Nibinamik.

Our rights and responsibilities as Indigenous peoples, and our constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights, guide our work as a First Nation in planning for the future. Since the 1980's Nibinamik has been involved in a community-led process of Land Use Planning and has developed our Traditional Land Use Access Protocol that guides access to and activities in our traditional territory. While this work has been driven by our community—and has been undertaken outside of the land use planning processes of the *Far North Act*—the potential removal of this piece of legislation raises concerns for Nibinamik.

First, Ontario's *Far North Act* is a significant piece of legislation for First Nation communities in the North. It embeds the importance of community-led land use planning and exercise of Indigenous rights of stewardship and jurisdiction over our territories in Ontario law. The significance of these commitments and the recognition and affirmation of our rights—as Indigenous people and the first stewards and owners of these lands—as acknowledged by Ontario in this legislation cannot be overstated.

Second, and contrary to what Ontario has said about the *Far North Act* “hindering investment opportunities”, these types of jurisdictional and land use planning regimes actually support and foster a climate of positive and responsible economic growth and development. The repeal of the *Far North Act*—particularly with nothing in its place to fill this critical gap—would only put off for tomorrow what we could do today. It will only cause delayed approvals through project-by-project consultation and accommodation duties rather than comprehensive, proactive, and joint land use planning and development. Such an approach would be incredibly short-sighted and cannot be what Ontario intends through this review.

Third, Ontario’s unilateral approach has identified no way to solicit First Nations input into the review of the *Far North Act* and makes repeal sound like a foregone conclusion. A collaborative process of review could still identify amendments to the *Act* that would align interests between Ontario and First Nations while still respecting our Aboriginal and Treaty rights. This is the only way Ontario can uphold the commitments it has made to First Nation communities in the North.

It is of vital importance that any decisions within our traditional territory that have the potential to affect the lands, waters, and resources involve Nibinamik First Nation. Our rights, responsibilities, and jurisdiction must be respected by Ontario. Until a meaningful and collaborative process for the review of the *Far North Act* is established between us, Nibinamik remains strongly opposed to any potential repeal of the Act, its regulations and its environmental protections, recognition of our rights, jurisdiction, and stewardship.”

Note to media: Thank you for your interest but there will be no media availability to accompany this statement.