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## Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **FIRST NATION IMPACTED BY RING OF FIRE REJECTS ONTARIO'S ROAD ANNOUNCEMENT; SAYS THE PROVINCE HAS NOT OBTAINED ITS FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSET**

**TORONTO, ON:** Neskantaga First Nation Chief Wayne Moonias made statements today at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) meeting to reject Ontario's latest plans to move forward with the Ring of Fire without his community's consent. Ontario announced its approval of the Terms of Reference for an environmental assessment of the Northern Road Link, an industrial mining road. It is a road that will fragment sensitive carbon-rich peatlands in the Attawapiskat River watershed -- the lifeblood of Neskantaga homelands and vital habitat for threatened lake sturgeon -- for the sole purpose of accessing mineral deposits in the Ring of Fire.

Neskantaga First Nation is a small Anishinaabe community on the shores of Attawapiskat Lake in the far north of the province that has been a vocal opponent of developing the Ring of Fire.

"If Premier Ford wants to get on a bulldozer, if the CEO of Ring of Fire Metals wants to get on a bulldozer, they're going to have to run me over," said Chief Wayne Moonias upon hearing the announcement from the province Monday that the terms of reference for the Northern Road Link, an all-season road to connect the proposed mine site to the provincial highway network were approved. "That is how important this river system, and the sturgeon, are to our community. Even if it is to risk our own lives, we intend to protect our homelands."

The proposed Northern Road Link is an industrial mining road that would serve eventual mines in the Ring of Fire region. In order to reach the mineral deposits, it will have to cross the Attawapiskat River, what Chief Moonias calls the "lifeblood" of his people.

"Neskantaga has been very clear about what they expect. They expect their laws and protocols to apply on their lands. We are asking the province to respect that, and to commit to the standard of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) which applies according to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples", said Dayna Nadine Scott, associate professor at Osgoode Hall Law School and the York Research Chair in Environmental Law & Justice in the Green Economy.

Neskantaga First Nation holds the shameful distinction of the longest running boil water advisory in the country, at 28 years. "But despite all the trauma and grief", Chief Moonias says, "the land sustains us. It provides the balance, it is what connects us. We intend to stand firm on our position and to remain strong and united."



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Chief Moonias' reaction at PDAC: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Rh5id8YZPE>