



NESKANTAGA FIRST NATION

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Neskantaga First Nation Strongly Opposes Passage of Bill 5: Official Statement

June 5th, 2025

Neskantaga First Nation strongly opposes the passage of Ontario's Bill 5, *Protect Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy Act*, 2025.

The grassroots people of our remote First Nation community are offering a clear statement: we will protect the Attawapiskat River System and we will protect our homelands. Any attempt to "fast track" mining and infrastructure development in our territory without our consent will be met by our people on the ground.

We, the Anishinaabe people of Neskantaga First Nation live on the headwaters of the Attawapiskat River. It is the lifeline of our community. We use the whole river to hunt, fish, trap and as a means of transportation. It is the most vital source of health and life to our people. Bill 5 is an immediate threat to the environment, plant and animal life, and the traditional land users who have all depended on this land since time immemorial.

"No outside government or nation can decide what will happen in our homelands. Any decision regarding laws that govern our homelands must go through our authority," says Chief Gary Quisess.

Ontario—under Canada's own constitution—must obtain our free, prior and informed consent for projects that can fundamentally change our way of life. Do not forget: Canada recognizes our legal system and authority of our law. Not only through our constitutionally-protected Aboriginal and Treaty rights, but through Canada's obligations to international law in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and of course through Treaty 9 itself.

In response to the possibility of Indigenous-led blockades of our homelands Premier Ford has told First Nations that "You can't break the law." We say the same to Ontario: Bill 5, with its ability to suspend provincial and municipal laws for projects *it* deems essential, is in direct violation of Anishinaabeg law, Treaty law, and Neskantaga's own inherent jurisdiction. Premier Ford is confused if he thinks these "special economic zones" will be allowed to serve as "constitution free zones."

"There will be no bulldozing across the Attawapiskat River without our consent," states Chief Quisess. "Our people will stand together and stand strong. We are connected to these lands and waters, and we will continue to be long after these companies have finished looking for metals."

We will not stand idle in the face of attempts to destroy our homelands, our river, our medicine, and sturgeon. We will fight for our rights. We will fight for our future.

Sincerely,

Chief Gary Quisess
Neskantaga First Nation

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