

Two First Nations working on roads to Ring of Fire do not support new mining law

By **Canadian Press** - June 12, 2025



Liam Casey, The Canadian Press

Two First Nations that signed deals with the provincial government to improve access to the Ring of Fire are speaking out against a new Ontario law that seeks to ease mineral extraction in the northern region.

Aroland First Nation Chief Sonny Gagnon said his community objects to the law known as Bill 5, which seeks to speed up development in the face of pressure from the United States.



EN



ONTARIO
Construction
ONTARIO'S FIRST DAILY DIGITAL CONSTRUCTION NEWSPAPER

**FREE DAILY CONSTRUCTION
NEWS UPDATES IN YOUR INBOX**

The daily Eletter is sent each morning with up-to-date news and information on selected bidding opportunities.

Enter your email address

SUBSCRIBE

Receive daily news updates each morning by email from Ontario Construction News. with your free basic subscription. You'll only receive emails from us as long as you wish to receive them.

The legislation passed last week and allows Ontario to suspend provincial and municipal laws by creating so-called special economic zones for certain projects it chooses, such as new mines.



"We do not stand with Ontario in support of Bill 5," Gagnon said in a statement.

"We do stand in support of the other First Nations in Ontario who are opposed to Bill 5 and working to have it thrown out."

Ontario intends to name the mineral-rich Ring of Fire as the first such zone, but the law has created a firestorm of opposition. Many say they want to be involved in development and respect their treaty rights and ignores their concerns.

Aroland signed a shared-prosperity agreement for major upgrades to roads that lead to the Ring of Fire, a 5,000 square kilometre region in the north of Lake Huron Bay, Ont.

Aroland sits outside the Ring of Fire region, a highway system that ends near its territory.

Premier Doug Ford has trotted out Gagnon in recent weeks in defence of Bill 5.

Ford also often points to Marten Falls and other communities which are the lead proponents for the new highway communities to the provincial highway system.

One of them would connect the Eagle's Nest site in the Ring of Fire, a proposed mine owned by Australian mining giant Wyloo, to the other two roads.

"There's going to be a group that doesn't want anything done," Ford said last week.





ONTARIO
Construction
ONTARIO'S FIRST DAILY DIGITAL CONSTRUCTION NEWSPAPER

**FREE DAILY CONSTRUCTION
NEWS UPDATES IN YOUR INBOX**

The daily Eletter is sent each morning with up-to-date news and information on selected bidding opportunities.

Receive daily news updates each morning by email from Ontario Construction News, with your free basic subscription. You'll only receive emails from us as long as you wish to receive them.



EN

good, don't do it then. There's going to be another group in the middle says, 'Boy, let's see what happens.' And then there's the progressive

group that's saying, 'Let's get it done,' like Chief Sonny from Aroland — and Webequie and Marten Falls."



Gagnon said Aroland has never consented to mining the Ring of Fire. Rather, part of the agreement was designed to give road access to its neighbouring First Nation, Marten Falls.

Marten Falls and Webequie First Nation are fly-in communities that have a month or so of winter road access.

"Aroland has never said Marten Falls cannot build a road so that it is no longer remote; if they want to have road access, we do, they should be able to," Gagnon said.

"But that has to be done right – with proper measures and Aroland involvement and Ontario is about that, and some neighbouring community. We were to get funding to have received nothing and instead have ensure our community has basic services."

Aroland does not consent to that road being added.

"We have consistently in writing indicated that what happens to the Ring of Fire should be being conducted now and being co-located with Aroland, is complete, and indicates that the vulnerable peatlands region is safe for humanity, for us, for wildlife, climate and water," Gagnon said.

"We don't yet know that. More important – Ontario does not yet know that."

Marten Falls First Nation also has an agreement with the province on roads, and its chief says he cannot support the law as it is written — though he hopes Ontario can correct course with consultation.





ONTARIO
Construction
ONTARIO'S FIRST DAILY DIGITAL CONSTRUCTION NEWSPAPER

**FREE DAILY CONSTRUCTION
NEWS UPDATES IN YOUR INBOX**

The daily Eletter is sent each morning with up-to-date news and information on selected bidding opportunities.

Receive daily news updates each morning by email from Ontario Construction News, with your free basic subscription. You'll only receive emails from us as long as you wish to receive them.



EN

Bruce Achneepineskum said he is feeling conflicted.



"I'm not OK with this bill," he told The Canadian Press in an interview.



On the one hand, he and his community want road access built so they do not have to rely on winter roads. Last year, the frozen road only lasted a month as the winter road season keeps shrinking, he said.

Marten Falls also wants to be in the driver's seat for any development in its territory, Achneepineskum said.

"Our intent is to take the lead on development in our area and with that we're still in discussions with government on how to move forward," he said.

"We don't agree with everything that's being taken on an approach that's based on a

Marten Falls First Nation has been working on the roads.

One of the assessments has been in the area though about half that time was lost to the weather, Achneepineskum said.

"Sometimes, you think to yourself, the

Ford, Indigenous Affairs Minister Greg Selinger and Minister Stephen Lecce have said they will support the new law throughout the summer.

Achneepineskum said he is willing to listen to the province and give them time to get Bill 5 right, but, like many other First Nations have said, he wanted the province to consult with them on the language in the legislation rather than starting those conversations after it is already law.

"I have to support Aboriginal and treaty rights that other First Nations are talking about because, in principle, that's what we're fighting for also: to have our rights and interests in our traditional area — and that includes the Ring of Fire — recognized," Achneepineskum said.



**FREE DAILY CONSTRUCTION
NEWS UPDATES IN YOUR INBOX**

The daily Eletter is sent each morning with up-to-date news and information on selected bidding opportunities.

Receive daily news updates each morning by email from Ontario Construction News, with your free basic subscription. You'll only receive emails from us as long as you wish to receive them.



EN



Webequie's chief was not available to talk, as he continues to deal with a wildfire that has forced the evacuation of his entire community to southern Ontario.



Canadian Press



ONTARIO Construction



ONTARIO'S FIRST DAILY DIGITAL CONSTRUCTION NEWSPAPER

FREE DAILY CONSTRUCTION NEWS UPDATES IN YOUR INBOX

The daily Eletter is sent each morning with up-to-date news and information on selected bidding opportunities.

Receive daily news updates each morning by email from Ontario Construction News, with your free basic subscription. You'll only receive emails from us as long as you wish to receive them.



EN