



## CHIEFS COUNCIL

### MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## CHIEFS COUNCIL CALL FOR URGENT ACTION ON ROGERS 3G SHUTDOWN IN MATAWA FIRST NATIONS TERRITORIES

**THUNDER BAY, ON** – Today, the Matawa Chiefs Council (MCC) issued a letter to the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) raising their concerns regarding the scheduled Rogers' 3G cellular shutdown on December 31, 2025 warning that the move poses serious risks to the safety, health, and well-being of communities in the Matawa region of Northern Ontario.

"Reliable communications infrastructure is a matter of life and death in our communities," said Chief Sonny Gagnon. "In Aroland First Nation we don't even have the benefit of 3G (or any other cellular services) but that could change with immediate investment in upgrades to finalize compatibility to meet today's standards," he added.

Matawa First Nations include the remote fly-in communities of Eabametoong, Marten Falls, Neskantaga, Nibinamik, and Webequie First Nations who rely the heaviest on existing 3G cellular networks, which are already limited. These Nations are located in the highly discussed Ring of Fire region, but Chiefs stress that this is not simply about mineral development — it is about their homelands, peoples, and way of life.

The MCC are calling for support for Rapid Lynx Broadband, a Matawa-owned telecommunications company, to deliver urgently needed cellular upgrades. They are specifically urging the CRTC to ensure:

1. A one-year extension of 3G service, until January 1, 2027, to allow for transition.
2. Fast-tracked upgrades to 5G infrastructure in Matawa communities before the cutoff.
3. Full support for the infrastructure, operational, and capital costs required to modernize cellular systems in northern First Nations.
4. Recognition of the unique realities of remote northern geography, limited infrastructure, and decades of underinvestment.

"Reliable telecommunications are fundamental to health, safety, and sustainable development in our territories," stated Chief Solomon Atlookan of Eabametoong First Nation. "Our Nations cannot be left behind as Canada moves forward. We are ready with a Nation-led solution through Rapid Lynx Broadband, but we need immediate support and commitment from the CRTC, telecommunications providers, and governments."

Marten Falls First Nation Chief Bruce Achneepineskum stated, "cellular service is a lifeline in Marten Falls First Nation, as Treaty partners with Canada and Ontario, it is unacceptable that we could be potentially cut off at the end of this year."

Chief Gary Quisess of Neskantaga First Nation said that, “the shutdown would impact:

- **Emergency response & public safety** — First responders, police, and crisis teams need dependable communication tools.
- **Health & medical needs** — Cellular access is often the only lifeline for urgent medical evacuations and contact with practitioners.
- **Education & youth equity** — Students forced to leave their communities for high school rely on connectivity to stay linked with their families, languages, and cultures.
- **Everyday dignity** — Connectivity is about more than emergencies; it is about equal opportunity to live, work, and thrive.”

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