



MATAWA CHIEFS COUNCIL MATAWA FIRST NATIONS MANAGEMENT

**FORMAL BRIEF SUBMISSION TO THE
BILL C-39 HOUSE OF COMMONS LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE**

OCTOBER 26, 2026



HOUSE OF COMMONS LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON BILL C-39
MATAWA CHIEFS' COUNCIL BRIEF
BILL C-39 BUILDING CANADA STRONG ACT
October 26, 2026

To The Bill C-39 Committee Members, Government of Canada, and all Canadians;

The Matawa member First Nations (Aroland, Constance Lake, Eabametoong, Long Lake No. 58, Ginoogaming, Marten Falls, Neskantaga, Nibinamik and Webequie) are significantly impacted by Bill C-39 Building Canada Strong Act, recognizing the significant potential of the Ring of Fire, and the Ontario-Alberta Northern Shield Energy Corridor pipeline expansion project that is currently in the feasibility study stage. Both the Ring of Fire and Northern Shield Energy Corridor may be unilaterally designated as either national interest projects, or regions of national interest pending the advancement of Bill C-39.

Additional national interest or nation-building projects may yet emerge within the Matawa territories and homelands in the future.

Connecting the Ring of Fire and its strategic importance to the emerging Canada/USA steel tariff war it is the position of the Matawa Chiefs Council that the valuation of the Ring of Fire must be assessed in the billions (raw ore, processed chromium metal) and the trillions (superalloys), and that the Ring of Fire will be the source of a minimum of 70,000 direct jobs in the mining industry plus 195,000 jobs in Ontario's steel and fabricated metals industry plus an additional 115,000 jobs in vehicle and parts manufacturing.

However, addressing the current infrastructure, housing and energy deficits, public safety planning, and community well-being (health, education, social, cultural, language, economic) needs of the Matawa member First Nations remain a critical priority.

Canada's failure to address the needs and priorities of First Nations has sustained and long-term impacts.

James Bay Treaty No. 9 (1905-06 and 1929-30) is the only tripartite historic Treaty in Canada that includes a province as a signatory, and as such both Crowns in right of Canada and Ontario have the highest level of obligations to uphold the Honour of the Crown in the future Ring of Fire. James Bay Treaty No. 9 (1905-06 and 1929-30) is the source of the precious metals, critical minerals, hydro and timber that has driven the Ontario economy for over 100 years, while our Matawa member First Nations live in the constant state of infrastructure deficit, energy deprivation and economic hardship.

The unjust enrichment of Canada, and the Provinces of Ontario and Manitoba via the historic water diversions (Ogoki, Long Lake, Lake St. Joseph) and the specific terms of our Treaty - unilaterally set by the Province of Ontario that our First Nations would never be located near any potential hydro sites - have resulted in the inability of our communities to live and prosper at the same standard as our fellow Canadians.



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Since the construction of the diversion reservoirs in 1935 and the last wave of Canada and Ontario undertaking of the building of significant critical infrastructure for World War II, billions of dollars (preliminary estimate \$39.5 Billion CAD) have been generated for federal and provincial treasuries from hydroelectric revenues, gross revenue charges and water rentals, Great Lakes shipping maritime draft subsidies (permanently raised baseline water levels), and historic mining and forestry operations in the transport of raw resources (gold, timber). The annual amount of revenues generated from the water diversions is conservatively estimated at \$232.46 Million; with no economic reconciliation or revenue sharing agreement to date.

With these complex factors in consideration, the Matawa Chiefs Council also state the following to the Government of Canada on Bill C-39:

- Firstly, Canada's Bill C-39 *Building Canada Strong Act* will legislatively force or coerce the Matawa member First Nations into the designation of Canada's first Region of National Interest as First Nations (Aroland, Constance Lake, Eabametoong, Long Lake No. 58, Ginoogaming, Neskantaga, Nibinamik and Webequie) participated in good faith in the co-development of the Regional Assessment on the Ring of Fire Region, unbeknownst to the changes to the law that Canada would make to its own and Ontario's advantage.
- Secondly, Canada proposes in Bill C-39 to establish the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) as the new "Crown Consultation Hub" while IAAC itself is already potentially on constitutionally questionable jurisdictional grounds in the Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire Area¹ following the October 9, 2026, decision of the Alberta Court of Appeal².

In addition to the legislative force and coercion being exerted by Canada in Bill C-39:

- Canada is actively absolving itself of its Crown duty to consult and accommodate with the *Canada-Ontario Co-Operation Agreement*, 2025³ in closed-door tactics with the Ontario government.
- Canada is actively absolving itself of its economic reconciliation commitments with the Major Projects Office (MPO) position that *"Responsibility for Indigenous engagement related to commercial partnerships remains with the proponent; MPO plays a supporting and coordinating role."*

In closing, the Matawa Chiefs Council have maintained the consistent and transparent position of willing partnerships and working together with Canada and Ontario to ensure the community priorities for infrastructure, energy, housing, health care, education and well-being of our members be advanced alongside any development of our territory and homelands.

¹ <https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/evaluations/proj/80468?culture=en-CA>

² <https://www.canlii.org/en/ab/abca/doc/2026/2026abca320/2026abca320.pdf>

³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/impact-assessment-agency/corporate/acts-regulations/legislation-regulations/canada-on-cooperation-agreement.html>



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WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THE FOLLOWING

- *This brief is without prejudice to any position Long Lake No. 58 First Nation takes or may take regarding its Treaty status or its Aboriginal rights and title.*
- *This brief is without prejudice to the positions the Matawa member First Nations takes or may take on the issue of whether they are a party to any Treaty.*
- *This brief is without prejudice to any present or future legal challenges or statements of claim by any Matawa member First Nations or the Matawa Chiefs Council.*