

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NAN CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL OF BILL 191: THE FAR NORTH ACT

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy today announced NAN's condemnation of the Government of Ontario's proposed legislation on land-use planning the in Far North, Bill 191: *the Far North Act*. The *Act* enables legislation which will dictate the land use planning process in the Far North, the homelands of NAN First Nations.

“Chiefs from across Nishnawbe Aski are calling on the Government of Ontario to immediately withdraw Bill 191,” said Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy. “We will do everything we can to prevent this legislation from passing, but if Bill 191 is passed in spite of our opposition NAN First Nations will not recognize the legislation and will move to exercise full and exclusive jurisdiction over their traditional territory.”

NAN Chiefs-in-Assembly unanimously approved a resolution condemning Bill 191 at a special assembly held earlier this month.

“This legislation will set aside 225,000 square kilometres as a protected area within our homelands without our consultation, accommodation or consent and will lock down the land to prevent First Nations, the poorest people in Canada, from achieving economic independence by preventing the development needed to build our communities and strengthen the Ontario economy,” said Beardy.

Beardy noted that the July 23, 2009 deadline for expressions of interest to appear before the Standing Committee on Bill 191 does not give remote NAN First Nations sufficient time to respond. NAN is also concerned that the Standing Committee plans to hold only four hearing days outside of Toronto, all in mid-northern towns including Sioux Lookout, Thunder Bay, Chapleau, and Timmins, but none in NAN First Nations.

NAN has been holding discussions about land use planning and First Nation homelands with Ontario since 2007 to try to come to arrangements that respect First Nation and Treaty rights and promote economic development for NAN communities while also protecting the land for future generations. The Government of Ontario, however, has gone ahead with the *Far North Act* without consideration for NAN First Nation recommendations or concerns.

“The consultation process being imposed by the Province is unreasonable, unfair, unconstitutional (under the Constitution Act, 1982, Sec. 35) as Bill 191 significantly and negatively affects the traditional land and resource rights of all NAN First Nations,” said Beardy. “We are prepared to enter a fresh dialogue with Ontario on land-use planning, but only on the condition that Bill 191 is withdrawn and artificial deadlines on land-use planning are eliminated.”

NAN is appealing to First Nations, industry, environmental organizations and members of the general public to voice their opposition to Bill 191. A petition calling for Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty to withdraw Bill 191 is available at the Oski-Machiitawin website at www.oski-machiitawin.ca.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities in James Bay Treaty 9 and Ontario portions of Treaty 5 – an area covering two thirds of the province of Ontario.

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