



CHIEFS COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

A WIN FOR MATAWA FIRST NATIONS CANADA AND CLIFFS LOSE DECISION ON MOTIONS IN LEGAL PROCEEDING

Chiefs Reiterate Their Demand For An Immediate Halt to the Current Environmental Assessment Process

THUNDER BAY, ON. MARCH 19, 2013. - Matawa First Nations Chiefs welcome the decision by Madam Prothonotary Aronovitch of the Federal Court to deny motions filed by Canada and Cliffs in the Judicial Review (JR) proceeding that is examining the Environmental Assessment (EA) process in the Ring of Fire. The First Nations launched a legal challenge to the federal EA process for the Cliffs Chromite Project in early November 2011. Cliffs and Canada brought motions challenging some of the evidence of the First Nations in the case. On Friday March 15, 2013, Cliffs and Canada lost their motions on all counts. The Federal Court found that these motions caused "unnecessarily delay" in the proceeding. The court awarded costs to the First Nations, and set the case on an expedited schedule towards a hearing.

"Cliffs needs to halt the current EA process and negotiate an appropriate process with our First Nations. We believe the Court will agree with us on that too." said Chief Roger Wesley of Constance Lake First Nation.

"What we have now is a paper-based EA process, run completely outside of the communities affected, with no meaningful involvement of First Nations, and is non-transparent. It needs to be made accessible, by holding hearings in the First Nations and using an independent panel. The First Nations have made it very clear that they are willing to negotiate the parameters for an effective EA process," said Chief Sonny Gagnon of Aroland First Nation.

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency decided on a Comprehensive Study EA process in 2011 for the Cliffs Chromite Project. The Matawa First Nations Chiefs have maintained that the process is on the wrong track and for two years have been demanding a better process. Proposed infrastructure alone for the Ring of Fire, Cliffs Chromite Project could cross several major rivers and 100 bodies of water in the ecologically sensitive traditional territories of the First Nations.

"I am concerned about the Tar Sands situation happening here, where accountability is buried in money, in particular the environmental process where companies spill poisons into the pristine waters of the Athabaska River, Slave Lake, McKenzie River and the other adjacent waters. We are talking about a project that can impact a fifth of the freshwater in Canada. The sponge bogs system of Muskege and





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water ways in the Ring of Fire need to be protected from this power play. Hence my distrust of the Comprehensive Study EA process.” said Chief Eli Moonias of Marten Falls First Nation.

Matawa First Nations Management (MFNM) is a non-profit corporation and Tribal Council that provides advisory services to its nine member First Nations. The nine Member First Nations are:

- Remote (accessible by air or winter ice road) – Eabametoong First Nation, Neskantaga First Nation, Marten Falls First Nation, Nibinamik First Nation, Webeque First Nations;
- Road Access (accessible by provincial highways and roads) – Constance Lake First Nation, Aroland First Nation, Long Lake # 58 First Nation, Ginoogaming First Nation.

The Matawa Chiefs Council is the political arm of Matawa First Nations. It is made up of a Chief from each of the nine member First Nations of MFNM. The Chiefs’ understanding of community needs allows them to lead Matawa in its government relations and policies.

The Ring of Fire is the name given to a geographical area located in Matawa First Nations traditional territories in Northern Ontario. It is in the James Bay Lowlands, which holds the largest collections of intact wetlands in the world. The Ring of Fire also holds immeasurable wealth in the form of precious metals and minerals, and has the potential to drive Ontario and Canada’s economy for decades.

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