

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS

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June 15, 2011

Honourable Chris Bentley, M.P.P.
Minister of Aboriginal Affairs
160 Bloor Street East, Suite 400
Toronto, Ontario
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Honourable Linda Jeffrey, M.P.P.
Minister of Natural Resources
6th Floor, Room 6630, Whitney Block
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Toronto, Ontario
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Dear Ministers:

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH), our 100,000 members, supporters and subscribers, and our 670 member clubs across the province, we are writing to express our profound disappointment and concern over recent information indicating that the Province, despite having announced a delay in the Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) process for the Algonquin Land Claim, has in fact been forging ahead without engaging in the fulsome public consultation to which was committed. We are further concerned about reports that draft chapters of the AIP dealing with land selection, and more importantly, harvesting, are almost complete, despite the lack of substantive discussions with affected stakeholders and the general public.

In talking to Ministry staff, the OFAH has been told that the widely held view in both departments is that the peripheral discussions that have occurred with the OFAH, the Canadian Sportfishing Industry Association (CSIA) and others to date has satisfied the need to “consult,” and that for the most part, issues of concern have been resolved. In our view, nothing could be farther from the truth. The lack of substantive discussion, particularly around the issues of access and harvesting numbers, is disturbing.

Before draft chapters of the AIP are finalized, there must be an opportunity for serious input by the nonaboriginal community, the OFAH, the CSIA, landowners, anglers, hunters, cottagers, municipalities and others. This can only occur if decisions are not made in advance and presented to stakeholders and the general public as a *fait accompli*. We have heard nothing of the promised workshops that were supposed to take place in advance of decisions around land transfers and harvest agreements. We have heard nothing about the status of fish and wildlife assessments that are critically important before decisions on fish stocks and tag allocations are made. Without these and other detailed discussions on specific issues and numbers, the “consultation” that has been committed to is nothing more than a token gesture at best.

Ministers, at the Committee of External Advisors (CEA) meeting on February 8, 2011, the Chief Provincial Negotiator made it clear that the Province wanted to engage in “**detailed**” discussions with the organizations most affected by the land claim. MNR staff at the meeting stated that the focus groups, which began some time ago and were then summarily dismissed, would be reestablished. This has not occurred. There was a commitment that there would be no discussion about land until a consensus was reached by the Algonquin later in the year, yet we are hearing now that a draft chapter on land exists, and has been “endorsed” by all of the parties. A provincial representative at the CEA meeting indicated that there had only been a couple of “general” discussions with the Algonquin on harvesting. That same official has since indicated that several iterations of a draft chapter on harvesting have been produced. In fact, we now understand that a final draft chapter on harvesting is nearing completion. Ironically, it was this same representative who previously indicated that the “new found timeline” announced in February would provide for more time to meet with stakeholders and discuss “specifics.”

.....2

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS AND HUNTERS

Honourable Chris Bentley
Honourable Linda Jeffrey
June 15, 2011
Page Two

Clearly, that optimistic suggestion was unfounded, which prompts us to ask the following question: Will the Province have the promised **detailed** discussions with stakeholders on specifics, including designated species, harvest allocations, access, assessment, monitoring and enforcement **before** the chapters of the AIP are signed off on?

The OFAH wishes to make it clear that the perception that the broad, general discussions that have occurred to date are viewed by us as the promised consultation is blatantly false. While these meetings have been useful in understanding some of the broader principles in play, they have done nothing to satisfy the concerns of the 22,000 OFAH members who live in the land claim; they have done nothing to satisfy the 150,000 licensed hunters who hunt in the area; and they have done nothing to inform the 1.4 million nonaboriginals who live and work in the claim area. If it is the Province's intention to reach a consensus with the Algonquin on issues such as harvesting of fish and wildlife, designated or nondesignated species, land transfers/acquisition, access and other matters, and then present these decisions to the workshops as a done deal, that is not what was committed to by the Province; nor is this acceptable to either stakeholders or the public, both of whom will be impacted upon by the AIP and the final Treaty.

The OFAH has invested considerable time and effort into the creation of our policy papers "Algonquin First Principles" and our "First Nations Policy," both of which have been shared with you, your staff, the federal government and the Algonquin leadership. Those documents clearly demonstrate our understanding of the issues before us, and have served as the basis of meetings to date; however, we have also made it patently clear, as have dozens of other stakeholders, that we expect to have the substantive discussions on several critical issues before an AIP is arrived at, an AIP that is supposed to be delayed until next year, but which appears to be well down the road already.

We look forward to having the Province reaffirm the commitments that have been made to the OFAH and others in this matter.

Yours in Conservation,

Angelo Lombardo
Acting Executive Director

Greg Farrant
Manager, Government Affairs & Policy

AL/GF/jb

cc: Honourable John Duncan, M.P., Minister of Aboriginal Affairs
Cheryl Gallant, M.P.
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OFAH Board of Directors
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bcc: Ronald Doering
Craig Hughson