

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS

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July 29, 2011

Honourable Chris Bentley
Minister of Aboriginal Affairs
160 Bloor Street East, Suite 400
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2E6

Dear Minister:

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH), our 100,000 members, supporters and subscribers, and our 670 member clubs across Ontario, we are writing in response to your letter of July 7, 2011, and specifically in response to your position regarding the anticipated public consultation around the Algonquin Land Claim.

The OFAH continues to meet with provincial staff, the Chief Negotiator for both the province and the federal governments, and the Algonquin leadership and their negotiator Mr. Potts, to discuss issues of mutual concern. We have also appreciated the opportunity in the past to meet with you and your federal counterpart, the Honourable John Duncan, to discuss some of the key issues for the thousands of OFAH members, anglers and hunters, and the 1.5 million nonaboriginals who live and work in the claim area.

However, we are profoundly concerned with a statement contained in the correspondence noted above that clearly indicates that once an AIP is reached and is ratified by all three parties, only then will the broader public consultation which has been repeatedly promised take place, and only to “infill the detail of what will be contained in a final settlement agreement.”

Minister, when the announcement of a deadline extension for reaching the AIP was announced earlier this year, provincial staff, and indeed the Chief Provincial Negotiator, made it clear at the Committee of External Advisors meeting in Pembroke that this would provide additional time for public consultation and the scheduling of long anticipated public information and consultation workshops. To date, we have seen neither, and in light of your comment, it would appear that the promised consultation will not occur until after the AIP is signed, which flies in the face of previous commitments. Such a timeline is also diametrically opposite to the expressed position of the federal Minister at our last meeting with him.

We would respectfully remind you that several key pieces of provincial legislation include specific provisions for public consultation. In addition, the City of Toronto website contains the following definition of public consultation: “Public consultation is the two-way exchange of information between the Corporation and the public **before** decisions are made. It is an open and accountable process allowing individuals and groups to participate in the decision-making process . . .” Webster’s definition of public consultation suggests the following: “Two-way communication between public/stakeholders and a sponsor through which they both become better informed. Public consultation provides participants with the opportunity to influence decision making.”

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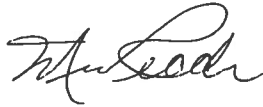
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While we recognize that the negotiation of the Algonquin Land Claim is between the Algonquin and the two senior levels of government, this does not excuse the indifference that is displayed by the province when it comes to the comprehensive public consultation that has been repeatedly promised.

The land claim process, particularly in the case of this particular claim, which has the potential to have a significant impact on the lives of over one million residents, anglers, hunters, municipalities, cottagers, land owners and others, demands that the public who will be most affected be heard. Proposing that these groups and individuals will only have their say after an AIP is arrived at and ratified by the parties, not only undermines the credibility of the public consultation process, but calls into question the motives of the government.

Therefore, we urge you, in the strongest possible terms, to review the provincial government's plans for public consultation around this groundbreaking claim, and ensure that the process includes a fair and open opportunity for information sharing and consultation with all affected parties while their input still counts.

Yours in Conservation,



Michael A. Reader
Executive Director



Greg Farrant
Manager, Government Affairs & Policy

MAR/GF/jb

cc: Premier Dalton McGuinty
Honourable John Duncan, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs
Honourable Linda Jeffrey, Minister of Natural Resources
Dean del Mastro, M.P.
Cheryl Gallant, M.P.
Jeff Leal, M.P.P.
John Yakabuski, M.P.P.
Jerry Ouellette, M.P.P.
Norm Miller, M.P.P.
Ron Doering, Chief Federal Negotiator
Brian Crane, Chief Provincial Negotiator
Kym Purchase, Director of Policy, Minister's office, Federal Minister of Aboriginal Affairs
Phil Morlock, Canadian Sportfishing Industry Association
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