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Indigenous grassroots reject Ontario's approval of Ring of Fire road project

March 6, 2023

ATTAWAPISKAT – The Friends of the Attawapiskat River reject the Province of Ontario's announcement approving the Terms of Reference for the environmental assessment for the final road project leading to the Ring of Fire.

The Friends are an Indigenous grassroots group based in Treaty 9, in the far north of Ontario, dedicated to protecting the health of the waters, people, and communities living downstream of the proposed mining project dubbed the 'Ring of Fire.'

"The province has no business in our treaty territory," stated Mike Koostachin, the founder of the Friends. "The grassroots people – the people of Treaty 9 – are owed a fiduciary duty and instead, Ontario is relying on divide and conquer tactics to push forward a project absent the free, prior and informed consent of *all* communities."

The Friends state it is "long overdue" for Ontario to abandon its divide and conquer tactics, which fragment Indigenous rights and create divisions both within and between communities. Each community's right to decide, according to their own laws and community-based protocols, must be respected when decisions are being made about their lifeways and homelands.

As Treaty 9 people, the Friends work to protect Treaty lands from exploitation and degradation. This means safeguarding the integrity of the boreal and muskeg of the Hudson Bay-James Bay lowlands and the health of their grandchildren and those not yet born. The Friends continue to call for an immediate moratorium for all mineral development and exploration in the Ring of Fire until:

1. Protection plans for the region's sensitive wetlands and watersheds are in place, and
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2. Access to clean water, housing, and health services have been secured for all upstream and downstream communities from the proposed Ring of Fire
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The Friends also stand with Neskantaga First Nation who earlier today, released a statement rejecting the road to the Ring of Fire announcing to all mining investors and the province, 'if you want to come and develop relationships in our community, get our free prior and informed consent first before you start making plans to come to our traditional lands.'

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