



May 17, 2025

RE: FRIENDS OF THE ATTAWAPISKAT RIVER
Comments on Bill 5 Proposals Posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario

The Friends of the Attawapiskat River, a Treaty 9 Indigenous grassroots advocacy group, are calling out the government of Ontario for proposing legislative changes that violate Natural law and Indigenous rights. Bill 5, *Protecting Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, 2025*, threatens to prioritize economic interests over environmental protection and respect for our Indigenous, Treaty and inherent rights.

We are the ancestral people of the lands where the Ring of Fire is proposed. We the Ojibwe, Ojibway, and Omushkegowuk people have lived in harmony with these lands given to us by the Creator since time immemorial. We are the Water People. The water gives us life and we take care of the water in return. This is our duty to the Creator.

We are the ancestors of the Headmen who signed Treaty 9 with the Crown to peacefully share the lands. Our Natural Laws teach us to respect the land and to maintain our relationship with the Creator. Our traditional ways do not involve greed or violence to these lands, but love, harmony and an ongoing commitment to each other.

We provide these comments to remind the province that we are the water people of the Omushkegowuk territory. Within our lakes, creeks, rivers, the carbon sink and the ocean, we live in harmony with the aquatic, the four legged and the winged ones. These are our Natural Laws from Creator.

The Friends submit this comment noting our opposition to all of the proposals precipitated by Bill 5, as posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO). These include:

- ERO No. 025-0380: Proposed interim changes to the Endangered Species Act, 2007 and a proposal for the Species Conservation Act, 2025;
- ERO No. 025-0396: Addressing Changes to the Eagle's Nest Mine Project;



- ERO No. 025-0389: Removing Environmental Assessment Requirements for the York1 Waste Disposal Site Project;
- ERO No. 025-0416: Protect Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy Act, 2025;
- ERO No. 025-0418: Proposed Amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act;
- ERO No. 025-0409: Proposed amendments to the Mining Act 1990, Electricity Act 1998, and Ontario Energy Board Act 1998; and
- ERO No. 025-0391: Special Economic Zones Act, 2025

Bill 5 is in breach of Natural Law and Protection Declaration

We oppose the government using the ‘tariff war’ as an excuse for greed, to advance personal and private gain. Bill 5’s intent to designate the proposed Ring of Fire area as a “Special Economic Zone” would see laws stripped in favour of private interests.

The government cannot keep digging up Mother Earth for a dollar, because you’re digging up something that can’t be replaced. Our rivers, our wildlife, and our communities are all at risk from the proposed mining developments. We will not stand by while our lands are destroyed.

The above noted ERO postings and Bill 5 breach our statement declaring the lands and waters in Treaty 9 where the Ring of Fire mining development is proposed as protected under our Natural Law. This declaration, known as the “[Protection Declaration](#),” affirms our commitment, as the Indigenous grassroots and Treaty rights holders, to safeguard the Hudson–James Bay Lowlands, one of the world’s most critical carbon sinks and a region of deep cultural and ecological importance.¹

We are protectors, not protestors. It is our duty and responsibility to protect our Mother Earth, our water, that gives us life. We have seen what greed did to our traditional territory and the contamination caused by De Beers’ mining projects to our river. We were promised traditional knowledge consultation and prosperity from the De Beers mine, both of which

¹ We ask that the province review and adopt the principles articulated in our Protection Declaration and carefully review all prior correspondence repeatedly calling out violations of our Treaty rights. A compilation of our correspondence to the province can be found online at:

<https://friendsoftheattawapiskatrivier.ca/resources/>



were not upheld. We have a duty to stand up and protect these lands. They are not just resources to be extracted – they are living, breathing relatives that sustain us all. We have seen what these developments and broken promises can do to our people and our lands

Bill 5 was created without any consultation, violates international and Treaty rights

The Friends, the grassroots of Treaty 9 and community members have never been consulted on this Bill nor given a meaningful opportunity to respond. This Bill is not constitutional. We ask the government to uphold Treaty promises to our people. Our communities rely on openness to thrive and all community members must be involved in any process on our lands.

Our community members are often left in the dark over these issues. Our suffering is a testament to that. We need the government to consult all communities to gain our free, prior, and informed consent, which is our legal right under UNDRIP and Canadian law. We call on the government to meet with all community members to discuss and meaningfully engage on this Bill. The government is legally bound by our Treaty and you must uphold the promise “for as long as the sun shines, the grass is green, the water flows and the Anishinaabe are here.”

Sincerely,

Michel Koostachin
Founder, Friends of the Attawapiskat River