



BINGWI NEYAASHI ANISHINAABEK

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February 2nd, 2026

Hon. Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Hon. Stephen Lecce
Ministry of Energy and Mines
77 Grenville Street, 10th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1B3

Hon. Mike Harris
Minister of Natural Resources
Suite 1802
438 University Avenue
Toronto, ON M5G 2K8

Re: Opposition to Proposed Regulatory Changes to "Reduce and Streamline Permissions"

Dear Premier Ford, Minister Lecce, and Minister Harris,

As Chief of Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek, I am writing to formally express my community's opposition to the Province of Ontario's proposed legislative and regulatory changes intended to "reduce and streamline permissions" across multiple statutes, including the *Ontario Water Resources Act*, *Environmental Protection Act*, *Crown Forest Sustainability Act*, and related regulations. I support many of the aims to reduce red tape and build Ontario's economy. However, it cannot be at the expense of our treaty rights and the conservation of our traditional territory.

While these proposals are framed as administrative efficiencies, our Nation has serious concerns that the cumulative effect of these changes will weaken environmental protections, reduce Crown oversight, and erode meaningful Indigenous involvement in decisions that directly affect our lands, waters, and Aboriginal and Treaty rights.

Of particular concern are proposals to:

- remove or exempt permits and approvals for water-taking, sewage works, air and noise emissions, and other environmentally impactful activities;
- shift regulatory oversight to permit-by-rule or code-of-practice approaches;



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- rely on proponent self-registration and self-compliance in place of Crown review; and
- consolidate planning and approval authorities in ways that reduce transparency and accountability.

These changes risk allowing development to proceed with fewer decision points, fewer safeguards, and fewer opportunities for consultation, despite the real and measurable impacts such activities may have on First Nations' rights, cultural practices, and stewardship responsibilities.

Lack of Adequate Consultation

We are particularly concerned about the lack of meaningful consultation on these proposals.

Although information sessions were held, communities in our region were given only one week after the sessions to review complex, cross-ministry regulatory changes and organize informed responses. While the session provided some information, many basic questions from our technical staff in attendance and from other communities received answers that were insufficient. The timeframe is also insufficient and does not reflect a good-faith approach to engagement with First Nations.

Furthermore, the absence of the Ministry of Energy and Mines from these sessions meant that communities were unable to raise concerns or receive responses regarding mining, mineral exploration, and associated water-taking and environmental impacts, despite these issues being central to the proposed changes. This gap significantly undermines the adequacy of the engagement process.

Public postings and short-notice information sessions do not fulfill the Crown's constitutional duty to consult and accommodate. Where regulatory changes could adversely affect Aboriginal and Treaty rights, direct Nation-to-Nation consultation is required.

Impacts to Rights, Lands, and Waters

Our Nation is especially concerned that these proposals:

- allow water to be taken without permits, monitoring, or site-specific assessment;
- fail to account for cumulative impacts on watersheds, wetlands, and culturally significant areas;
- disregard the central role of water in our cultural, spiritual, and subsistence practices; and
- reduce procedural safeguards that previously helped protect Indigenous rights and interests.

Removing regulatory checks does not eliminate risk; it shifts it to First Nations and future generations.

Our Position

We wish to be clear: Bingwi Neyaashi is not opposed to responsible development. We support development that:



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- respects Aboriginal and Treaty rights;
- involves First Nations early and meaningfully;
- protects land, water, and cultural values; and
- upholds the Crown's legal and constitutional obligations.

The proposed streamlining of permissions, as currently presented, fails to meet these standards.

We therefore call on the Government of Ontario to:

1. Pause the proposed regulatory changes until meaningful, Nation-to-Nation consultation with affected First Nations has occurred.
2. Clearly articulate how the duty to consult will be upheld where permits and approvals are removed or replaced.
3. Reconsider any exemptions that allow water-taking or environmentally impactful activities to proceed without Crown oversight.
4. Ensure that all relevant ministries, including the Ministry of Energy and Mines, are fully engaged in consultation processes where their mandates are implicated.
5. Work collaboratively with First Nations to co-develop regulatory approaches that respect Indigenous rights and environmental stewardship.

We expect our concerns to be taken seriously and addressed in a manner consistent with the honour of the Crown. Bingwi Neyaashi remains committed to protecting our lands, waters, and the well-being of future generations, and we will continue to oppose any measures that undermine these responsibilities.

Respectfully,

Chief Paul Gladu

Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek