

# “When we prosper, all of Ontario prospers...”

## EFN Community Update on meeting with Premier Ford

On May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Chief Elizabeth Atlookan and Councillor Wanda Sugarhead attended Question Period at Queen’s Park to observe the responses by the Ontario government to two questions that EFN helped to develop and were being asked by Kiiwetinoong MPP Sol Mamakwa. Chief Atlookan invited a number of other Matawa Chiefs to attend, and Chief Chris Moonias of Neskantaga First Nation and Chief Dorothy Towedo of Aroland First Nation were able to observe from the Member’s gallery with Chief Atlookan and Councillor Sugarhead. The exchange was captured on video and is available for viewing here: [link](#).

Unfortunately, Premier Doug Ford was not present for the question to be answered directly by him. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Steve Clark, responded but did not clearly answer the important and thoughtful questions asked by MPP Mamakwa, this brief dialogue at Queen’s Park did lead to a new opportunity.

Following Question Period, Sol Mamakwa asked Premier Ford if he would make time to meet with Chiefs Atlookan, Towedo, and Moonias since they were at Queen’s Park. The Premier agreed and asked the Chiefs to meet with him in his office.

What followed was a very productive and important first meeting. The Chiefs agreed beforehand to focus on common interests and topics advanced by all the Matawa Chiefs in previous meetings and correspondence with Ontario in order to help the Premier understand the importance of working together with the Matawa communities in our shared traditional homelands, including the Ring of Fire area.

Other key messages delivered by Chiefs Atlookan, Towedo, and Moonias included:

- **Ontario must meet with all Matawa Chiefs to decide the pathway forward on Ring of Fire in unity**
- **Premier must come to EFN and other remote communities to begin developing understanding so future negotiations on environment, infrastructure, and decision-making processes can be established that honour our Inherent, Aboriginal and Treaty rights**
- **We are trying to create certainty for all our First Nations people, we need to have our say in all major decisions on the land, and be planning for the future we want to achieve – not just be consulted**
- **So much work has been done on the ROF discussions by EFN members, we must build on what we've been working towards for years, but the Premier and your Ministers and Deputies need to take time to build real relationships and understand why its so important to do it right**
- **Lets work towards positive goals, ensuring that impacts to our rights are avoided, and working toward improving life because when we prosper, all of Ontario prospers**

Despite some of Ontario’s concerning actions to date, Premier Ford acknowledged the need to come north and meet with the Chiefs and community members to learn about the concerns and interests of EFN and our fellow communities. He also recognized the opportunity to start a new relationship focused on working together in cooperation, “...because we know nothing moves without your approval, so I am gung-ho to ensure all the First Nations are involved and prosper so we all prosper.”

As you can see from our follow up letter to the Premier, we are working toward setting a date for a major meeting in the near future and will be hosting workshops and community discussions to inform members on the issues, hear your thoughts, and work together to prepare for the coming meeting.

Chief Elizabeth Atlookan and Eabametoong Council