



Anishinaabe Agowidiiwinan

(Treaty 2) August 21, 1871

Dauphin River First Nation ♦ Ebb & Flow First Nation ♦ Keeseechewenig First Nation
Lake Manitoba First Nation ♦ Lake St. Martin First Nation ♦ Little Saskatchewan First Nation
O-Chi-Chak-Ka-Sip First Nation ♦ Pimayootang First Nation ♦ Skownan First Nation

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC AND MEDIA

Recent information in the public media reveals the Government of Manitoba is currently considering the issuing of several licenses for peat mining within the boundaries of the Treaty 2 Territory. There is been no move to date by the Government of Manitoba to consult with Treaty 2 First Nations nor to accommodate their rights.

As a result, Chief Norman Bone, co-chair of the Treaty 2 First Nations known collectively as *Anishinaabe Agowidiiwinan*, has today served notice to the Honorable Gord Mackintosh that they regard the pending provincial government's decisions as having strong potential for serious negative impact on the rights and interests of the First Nations; they believe acts taken pursuant to the license are likely to cause permanent and irreparable damage; and they state their constitutionally protected procedural rights have been breached.

"We believe it is incumbent upon the Government to abstain from any decisions that would result in the issuing of any licenses until such time as its constitutionally-mandated duties have been fulfilled," Chief Bone said in the Treaty 2 notice.

Canadians are increasingly aware of the severe environmental issues associated with peat. For centuries peat was used as a source of fuel, and in modern times it is commonly used as a growing medium in amateur gardening. Environment scientists are warning, however, that peat mining is an incredibly destructive and unnecessary industry.

Scientists maintain that peatlands, which are essentially wetlands, are natural filters that reduce harmful nutrients that enter lakes, while at the same time providing and storing clean, clear fresh water. Peat lowlands also provide important habitat for unique plant species like the carnivorous pitcher plant (right), as well as moose. A significant benefit of peatlands is that they store vast amounts of carbon, which helps mitigate the impacts of climate change. Mining them releases substantial amounts of greenhouse gases, both carbon and methane, into the atmosphere and stops the area from sequestering new carbon.

Treaty 2 First Nations have raised a second matter of great importance: the position that Treaty 2 was for the sole purpose of "immigration and settlement", and that any use of Treaty 2 Territory for other objectives would require just and equitable supplementary arrangements providing for compensation. This same position was taken by Treaty 1 in its judicial review applications to the Federal Court. We suggest our respective officials should engage in discussions as to how this matter is to be resolved, but that in the meantime, no permits should be issued by your government on behalf of the Crown.

Treaty 2 First Nations are asking the Government of Manitoba for two things: to have the provincial government fulfil their procedural duties to consult with the collective Treaty 2 First Nations so as to accommodate their rights and interests wherever there might be a negative impact, and secondly, to demonstrate to the First Nations that the ecology, lands and waters will not be damaged by the proposed projects. That would include consideration of the cumulative effects caused by concentrations of projects over time.

The First Nations say they are committed to working with all parties involved in the peat mining area within their Territory so as to protect and improve the ecology for future generations. They also say they will work cooperatively with the provincial government to fulfil its stated commitment to the protection of water, aquatic ecosystems, rare and endangered species and their habitat, drinking water supplies, recreation and socio-economic benefits to communities provided by a healthy ecosystems and sustainable development.

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