Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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NEWS RELEASE

Friday September 26, 2008 **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

FIRST NATIONS ENCOURAGE MUNICIPALITIES, INDUSTRY TO JOIN DEMAND FOR MORE TIME FOR MINING CONSULTATION

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy, together with the Oski-Machiitawin Chiefs Steering Committee, is encouraging municipalities, industry and other organizations to join its demand that the Government of Ontario provide more time for consultation before any revisions are made to the Mining Act.

"Across Ontario, First Nation and non-First Nation people have said very clearly that the timeframe set out by the government simply does not provide sufficient time to gather feedback from communities and does not provide the opportunity for meaningful input into this process," said Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy. "The October 15, 2008 deadline for submissions imposed by the Government of Ontario is unacceptable to NAN First Nations as it does not meet the culturally acceptable way for consultation in our communities."

The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines held only five public and stakeholder consultations to gather input into the Mining Act revision process, none of which were held in First Nation communities.

Mining is one of the most significant activities affecting NAN First Nations and has a direct impact on constitutionally-protected Aboriginal treaty rights, but there has not been enough time to develop a culturally appropriate method for consultation, noted Oski-Machiitawin Chiefs Steering Committee member Chief Arlene Slipperjack, adding that Supreme Court rulings have stated that First Nations must be consulted about activities that occur on their traditional homelands.

"How can the government draft legislation without an acceptable level of input from the people affected? Holding a few meetings in urban centres does not constitute consultation, nor does it come anywhere near meeting the government's duty to consult," said Chief Arlene Slipperjack, Whitewater First Nation. "We are not opposed to changing the Mining Act. In fact, we spearheaded the call for change at the Oski-Machiitawin discussions with the government last year. But we need time to develop a culturally-appropriate mechanism of consulting and gathering input from all NAN First Nations."

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities within James Bay Treaty 9 and Treaty 5 territory – an area covering two-thirds of the province of Ontario.

NAN is working through Oski-Machiitawin (formerly "Northern Table") to accelerate bilateral discussions with the Government of Ontario regarding lands and resources.

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