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OUR HOMELANDS ARE NOT FOR SALE: NESKANTAGA FIRST NATION CONDEMNS CANADA'S RING OF FIRE INVESTMENT PITCH

As Prime Minister Carney courts global investors in Toronto, Canada is marketing mineral exploration in Treaty No. 9 while governments advance the roads needed to open the Ring of Fire without Neskantaga's consent.

TORONTO — Today, as Prime Minister Mark Carney welcomes some of the world's largest investors to the Canada Investment Summit, Neskantaga First Nation is putting the Prime Minister, participating corporations and every investor in the room on notice: **our homelands are not Canada's to sell.**

The federal government's investment prospectus lists Juno Corp. as an investment opportunity based on its extensive mineral claims in the Ring of Fire. It promotes the company's fully funded $20-million exploration program, its gold and critical-mineral discoveries and its search for investors prepared to commit capital for more than a decade.

Neskantaga wants the investors here in Toronto today to know: Neskantaga will be meeting the mining industry on the land when the time comes. There is no certainty for Ring of Fire investments as long as our people are alive. We will defend our home and waters.

Canada is presenting contested lands in Treaty No. 9 as a long-term investment opportunity while Ontario accelerates construction of the Webequie Supply Road, the Marten Falls Community Access Road and the southern roads needed to reach the proposed Northern Road Link. These roads are being advanced before the Ring of Fire Regional Assessment is complete and without Neskantaga's free, prior and informed consent.

The summit exposes what Neskantaga has said all along: these roads are not simply community-access projects. Together, they are the industrial corridor governments and mining companies need to open the so-called Ring of Fire to large-scale extraction. Canada and Ontario are using public money, regulatory approvals and political promotion to manufacture the appearance that this development is inevitable and to make it more attractive to private capital.

Ring of Fire Road Approvals Do Not Create Certainty

On August 31, Ontario announced that construction had begun on the 184-kilometre Marten Falls Community Access Road. The federal environment minister allowed the project to proceed even after finding that it is likely to cause some *significant* adverse effects, including cumulative effects

on caribou and other wildlife, harvesting, Indigenous health and community well-being, cultural continuity, and the exercise of Aboriginal and Treaty rights.

Government officials know that Neskantaga is under a state of emergency. Our members remain evacuated in Toronto after our only nursing station was rendered unusable. Yet notices, approvals and project activities keep arriving at a pace that would challenge any community, let alone one fighting to keep its people safe.

Ontario can act as though these projects will proceed no matter what we say, but hear this: **we will not accept that, and we will not be silenced.**

Neskantaga respects the right of neighbouring First Nations to seek roads and infrastructure that respond to urgent community needs. But our respect cannot require our silence when decisions threaten our shared lands, waters and future generations. Ontario has made its own intentions clear: it describes the Marten Falls road as a critical link in a larger 514-kilometre corridor to the Ring of Fire.

The MFCAR connects to a community, yes. But at the end of the day, to Ontario, this is a mining road.

The Northern Road Link, part of this mining road system, will cross the Attawapiskat River and directly affect Neskantaga's homelands, waters and Treaty rights. It offers no benefit to our community. It has not been approved, and Neskantaga has not consented to it. The approval of one road does not authorize the next road, the mines that may follow, or the industrial transformation of the entire region.

Let us call this what it is. Whatever hopes individual communities may hold for all-season access, the Ford government's overriding objective in approving and constructing this network is to secure year-round industrial access to Treaty No. 9 homelands and open the north to mining. Ontario is using our communities' legitimate need for safe, reliable infrastructure as the gateway to an extraction corridor.

Ontario is taking crises created by generations of colonial neglect and turning them into leverage for industrial development.

To our relatives and neighbours, we ask you to look beyond the money being offered today and confront what comes next. When the roads are built and the government steps back, who will you be left to deal with? Are you prepared to negotiate with mining executives and corporate lawyers whose duty is not to your people, your lands or Treaty No. 9, but to their shareholders? How long will it take before your rights, your laws and your responsibilities to the land are recast as "red tape" standing in the way of investment?

Millions of dollars may appear substantial today, but compare those offers with the full and lasting needs of our communities: health emergencies, overcrowded housing, addiction and mental-health crises, the soaring cost of food and essential goods, and the accelerating effects of climate change on community infrastructure and the land itself. Short-term funding cannot meet all the crises of today, let alone those of tomorrow.

The money is *finite*. The loss of land and water is *permanent*.

Our land is our greatest wealth. It is our source of food, medicine, shelter, knowledge, identity and healing. It has sustained our people for countless generations and is the only inheritance capable of sustaining those still to come. Once the land and water are damaged, no government loan, business agreement, compensation package or corporate apology can restore what has been lost.

When proponents say, "We will do this carefully," we reject that false comfort. It is short-sighted to believe that money and promises of careful construction can protect a living homeland from the cumulative force of roads, bridges, aggregate pits, work camps, exploration traffic and mines.

The future these approvals point toward is dark, and we will not pretend otherwise. It means profits leaving the north while our children inherit the cleanup, the cumulative damage and the loss of places that cannot be replaced. This is not pessimism. It is the foreseeable result of Ontario's stated plan, and it is what the history of extraction on Indigenous lands has repeatedly shown.

The same governments that can mobilize billions of dollars, ministries and regulatory machinery for mining roads have failed to provide Neskantaga with dependable drinking water, adequate housing, and safe health infrastructure. That is not simply a lack of capacity. It is a political choice about what this government values and whose lives it is prepared to endanger.

Neskantaga will remain principled and strong. We will not surrender our homelands to extractive industries, climate destruction, or the shameless greed of mining executives and their shareholders. We will use every lawful political, legal and land-based means available to defend our people and Mother Earth.

Stand with Neskantaga. Stand with the women, Elders, youth and land defenders leading this struggle. Stand with the water, the animals, and our Mother Earth.

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Neskantaga will be attending the rally against the Canadian Investment Summit this evening, September 14th, at Nathan Phillips Square. Chief Gary Quisess will be present and available for comment and interviews.

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