Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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NEWS RELEASE

Thursday May 17, 2007 **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

NAN GRAND CHIEFS SAYS SPECIFIC NEEDS OF FAR NORTH MUST BE INCLUDED IN ONTARIO'S GROWTH PLAN

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy says a provincial growth plan focused on Northern Ontario will benefit municipalities and urban areas, but during development more emphasis must be placed on how the plan will impact NAN territory which spans the far north of the province.

"It's great to see an announcement for plans of economic growth and opportunity for Northern Ontario, however in order for NAN territory to benefit from a growth plan for Northern Ontario the unique needs of the Far North must be considered and accommodated," said NAN Grand Chief Stan Beardy, adding he will continue to advocate to ensure the 49 First Nation communities he represents across two-thirds of Ontario will benefit from development.

Beardy's comments come after this morning's Thunder Bay announcement by Minister of Natural Resources and Minister Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs David Ramsay who presented the concept of northern renewal and the idea of attracting young Ontarians to live, work, and raise families.

Ramsay cited some examples of how Ontarians have achieved results in the past by working together, mentioning highway improvements, creation and sustainability of jobs through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation, and assistance to the forest industry.

"In the past similar plans have focused on municipalities where there is already a base infrastructure to enhance of build from," said Beardy. "What's unique about NAN territory is we don't have that economic base to build from, which means there's a whole other list of priorities that need to be met in such a plan."

Beardy is also concerned by meeting the needs of stakeholders including business, industry, and environmental groups, NAN territory could be negatively impacted.

"Meeting the needs and priorities of some of the stakeholders of development could infringe on our constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights," said Beardy, adding that if proper legislation isn't in place (ie: resource revenue sharing), industry could benefit far more from the growth plan while NAN communities will continue to be faced with the challenge of meeting a basic standard of life.

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