Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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NEWS RELEASE

Wednesday August 12, 2009 **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

NAN CHIEFS TAKE STANCE AGAINST BILL 191

CHAPLEAU, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy, together with the 49 NAN First Nation Chiefs, Elders, Women, Youth and supporters, attended a Standing Committee hearing today at the Chapleau Recreation Centre to reiterate their call for the immediate withdrawal of Bill 191, the *Far North Act.*

"We want the standing committee to be clear that we want legislation that is respectful to our processes, and which does not unilaterally set aside a vast tract of land without our consultation and consent," said Nishnawbe Aski Nation Grand Chief Stan Beardy immediately after his presentation. "We are not opposed to the idea of protected areas via land use plans. Instead we want legislation that recognizes and protects our interests in addition to the protection of our sacred homelands."

The *Far North Act* will set aside 225,000 square kilometres as a protected area within NAN First Nation homelands without their consultation, accommodation or consent. It will effectively lock down the land to prevent First Nations, among the poorest people in Canada, from achieving economic independence by preventing the development needed to build healthy communities and help strengthen the Ontario economy.

"To set up a hearing process that makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible for people that will be directly impacted by the proposed legislation is not only disrespectful but goes against the fundamental belief of our democratic principles," said Frank Beardy, lead negotiator for Oski-Machiitawin on the hearing process, which will see visits from Standing Committee members to municipalities outside the impacted area for public input, but not to the communities located within the area under consideration for protection.

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

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