



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

McGUINTY DUCKS ON FIRST NATIONS ISSUES

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Deputy Grand Chief Terry Waboose says Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty is ducking First Nations issues by refusing to participate in a northern Ontario leaders' debate in the run-up to the provincial election.

“The Premier has a duty to answer the tough questions that are being put to him by First Nations and other northern Ontario leaders. Dalton McGuinty is willing to come north for a barbeque, but won't show up when there are tough questions to be answered,” said NAN Deputy Grand Chief Terry Waboose. “This is a question of accountability. If the Premier is a no-show for the debate, it simply proves our concern that First Nations are not a priority for the McGuinty Liberals.”

While the other party leaders have committed to a Northern debate, Premier McGuinty has thus far refused to attend.

This is not the first time that the McGuinty Liberals have failed First Nations.

On land-use and resource development, without any meaningful consultation, the Far North Act (Bill 191) was passed while First Nations initiatives to modernize the Mining Act and input on the Forest Tenure Modernization Act were ignored.

The Ontario justice system has also failed First Nations as it is currently impossible to strike a valid jury in the north as a result of long term systemic exclusions of First Nations from jury rolls. Tragically, seven NAN youth have died while attending school in Thunder Bay and the justice system can't (Bushie Inquest) or won't investigate (call for Commission of Inquiry ignored).

In addition, the jailing of the leadership of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwig (KI) in 2008 for protecting their homelands demonstrates a blatant disregard for the authority of First Nations leaders to exercise their rights over their lands.

“The Premier has some explaining to do. He is not beyond accounting for his actions,” said Waboose. “If the McGuinty Liberals were serious about working with First Nations and addressing these issues the Premier would make himself available.”

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities in James Bay Treaty No. 9 and Ontario portions of Treaty No. 5 – an area covering two thirds of the province of Ontario.

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