

Proposed wording for a letter to the Premier and Local MPP from the Chiefs of Ontario

"I am writing to express my opposition to Bill 5: *Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, 2025*. As an Ontario resident, I am alarmed by the sweeping changes proposed under this omnibus bill and the harmful consequences it poses to First Nations and our constitutional rights, the environment, and the future of the province.

This bill undermines critical environmental protections, fast-tracks resource extraction, and disregards the duty to consult with First Nations by weakening the ***Environmental Assessment Act***, the ***Endangered Species Act***, and the ***Mining Act***, among others.

The changes proposed in schedule 5 give unchecked power to the Minister of Energy and Mines to authorize mining operations without regard for the principle of **free, prior, and informed consent**. Declaring areas like the Ring of Fire as "special economic zones" without comprehensive engagement with the many First Nations affected by these developments is a direct violation of First Nations rights and sovereignty.

Schedule 7 of the bill is equally concerning. Granting the Lieutenant Governor the power to exempt development from archeological assessments risks erasing and disturbing sacred sites, burial grounds, and cultural heritage. First Nations must be notified and involved when ancestral remains or sacred belongings are discovered. Anything less is a continuation of colonial violence and a betrayal of Ontario's commitment to truth and reconciliation.

Bill 5 also enables an exemption to species at risk protections for the sake of "economic growth" which reveals a dangerous shift in priorities away from environmental stewardship. This is painfully shortsighted, as there can be no economy without a healthy and resilient environment. The removal of recovery strategies for endangered species and exclusion of First Nations from these processes only deepen the harm.

As an individual who believes in justice, environmental protection, and upholding the rights of First Nations, I urge you to withdraw Bill 5 immediately. True economic prosperity cannot come at the cost of violating treaty rights, silencing First Nations voices, and sacrificing our environment for short-term industry gain.

Ontario must respect the inherent, treaty, and constitutional rights of First Nations and the Crown must fulfill its legal and moral obligations to consult, collaborate, and obtain consent before proceeding with any developments that affect First Nations lands and waters.

May 28, 2025

I stand in solidarity with First Nations Leadership in opposing Bill 5.

Sincerely,"