





For Immediate Release March 20, 2006

## Pressure growing for moratorium on development in northern Ontario

Industrial activities draw ire of First Nations and conservation groups

**Thunder Bay, Ontario** – The Premier of Ontario continues to be deluged with hundreds of letters urging the Province to heed an urgent call by First Nations groups for an immediate moratorium on industrial development in Ontario's northern boreal region. More than 500 concerned citizens from across the province – and as far away as New Brunswick and New Zealand – have submitted letters in support of a moratorium in the past 3 weeks.

"We are grateful for the support from across the province, the country and around the world," says John Cutfeet, spokesperson for Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug. "The government has to heed the will of the people and the decisions from the Supreme Court of Canada respecting the duty to consult with First Peoples."

Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug and eight Ontario First Nations have called for a halt to all forestry and mining in their ancestral lands, stating that "the health of our ecosystems, waters and natural resources of our communities are endangered by mining explorations and other forms of resource development."

The First Nations efforts echo a similar call from a coalition of eleven conservation groups, who have also demanded a halt on industrial development in Ontario's northern boreal region until the province completes a comprehensive land use planning process. Premier McGuinty made a promise to do this in 2003, but has yet to act.

"This is just the beginning," said Anna Baggio of CPAWS Wildlands League. "Ontarians continue to show their strong support for a moratorium on industrial activities in the north. And we intend to ensure that the province lives up to its promise to provide adequate safeguards to protect the ecological values of the remaining intact boreal landscape."

The lack of government action has further fuelled conflict in the region. Last week, Sierra Legal Defence Fund joined with Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug in issuing letters to both the province and an exploration company concerning a conflict in the community's traditional territory.

"Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug is concerned that mining exploration is being pursued in its traditional territory without adequate consultation or accommodation of their hunting and trapping rights and other interests," said Sierra Legal lawyer Justin Duncan. "Sierra Legal has asked the province to explain how it intends to ensure that their rights are respected and ensure that meaningful consultations are undertaken prior to allowing any further exploration activities to occur."

The groups will be meeting in Thunder Bay on Monday to discuss further legal strategies.

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Representatives from CPAWS Wildlands League, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug and Sierra Legal will be available for comment at 2pm on Monday March 20, 2006 at the TravelLodge Airlane, Thunder Bay (in Salon A).

For further information please contact:

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