

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

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### **Take time now to assess impacts of mega-mines in Northern Ontario, environmentalists tell federal and Ontario governments**

*Groups demand greater scrutiny through joint review panel*

TORONTO – Today Ecojustice and CPAWS Wildlands League are calling on Federal Environment Minister Peter Kent and Ontario's Minister of the Environment Jim Bradley to appoint an independent joint review panel to assess a proposed mega-mine for chromite in northern Ontario by the American-based Cliffs Resources Company.

The public interest groups are supporting the demand earlier this month by Matawa and Mushkegowuk First Nations that the federal Minister conduct a review panel.

The Cliffs project is the first proposed mine in this vast, intact area. The environmental groups are concerned that mining will cause massive permanent changes to sensitive ecosystems and local communities in Ontario's Far North.

"The cumulative impacts of this project are wholly unknown at this point and approval of the first one will most likely lead to multiple others being developed. Just how much mining can one watershed sustain before its health is compromised?" said Anna Baggio, Director, Conservation Land Use Planning for CPAWS Wildlands League.

Public interest groups have called on governments this year to conduct a regional assessment of mining in Ontario's Ring of Fire area to ensure that the total extent of impacts on the area will be fully considered before mining development proceeds any further.

"Communities and indeed all concerned Canadians need this type of critically important information before massive exploitation of Ring of Fire mineral deposits commences, at the very least we need a joint review panel," says Baggio.

Contrary to the assertions of Cliffs Resources, an environmental assessment by a "joint review panel" would be far superior to the current process of "comprehensive review study" that the federal government has initiated. A joint review panel will avoid having multiple assessment process federally and provincially and will ensure that local First Nations who will be most impacted by this project will have a role in deciding how it can be developed. Additionally, concerned Canadians will be able to participate and provide submissions in public hearings to impartial panel members.

"The Matawa and Mushkegowuk First Nations need a joint review panel in order to address concerns about how this project will impact their communities and the environment," said Justin Duncan, staff lawyer for Ecojustice. "Doing so will ensure those communities have a stronger voice on a project that will transform Ontario's Far North."

The federal and provincial Ministers of the Environment have the discretion to reach an agreement to bump up the environmental assessment of Cliffs Chromite Project to a joint panel review. For example, the Ministers struck a joint review panel for the proposed Marathon platinum and copper mine in August of this year. One of the main reasons for such a decision is public concern. Ecojustice and CPAWS-Wildlands League hope that other members of the public, including other companies operating in the Ring of Fire encourage Canada and Ontario to conduct a more thorough assessment of the project.

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*A chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society*

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For more information see [www.wildlandsleague.org](http://www.wildlandsleague.org) and [ecojustice.ca](http://ecojustice.ca)