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# IROQUOIS CAUCUS

## Iroquois Caucus Declaration of Opposition to the Algonquins of Ontario Agreement-in-Principle

**(Ottawa – March 3, 2016)** We, the member communities of the Iroquois Caucus, are hereby declaring resolute opposition to the Algonquins of Ontario (AOO) Agreement-in-Principle as negotiated between the Algonquins of Ontario, Canada and Ontario.

The Iroquois Nation has a long history of use and occupation of its traditional lands, a portion of which include lands that are currently situated within the borders of the AOO land claim settlement. The Iroquois Caucus has made several attempts to collect information and raise concerns on the land claim. Despite this, none of the negotiating parties have taken any substantive steps to address the Iroquois and First Nations rights, interests and title that will be adversely affected as a result of these negotiations.

The federal claims policy derogates responsibility for addressing and resolving overlapping interests in active claims negotiations, to and between the Indigenous Nations themselves. This policy does not reflect the political and legal context of land claim agreements and leads to injustice for many First Nations across Canada. The consideration of how negotiated agreements may affect other rights-holders is a responsibility that must fall to all negotiating parties. Attempting to derogate this to the Indigenous Nations themselves, releases the Crown from its duty and obligations. **The Iroquois Caucus is firm in its position that the Algonquins of Ontario and the Federal and Provincial governments do not have the authority to make agreements that will affect Iroquois rights and interests without our consent.**

Further, aside from the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn, the parties that comprise the AOO in negotiations, are not the proper rights holders and cannot make decisions regarding the rights and title of the Algonquin Nation as a whole. **Consequently, the Iroquois Caucus is opposed to negotiating any type of overlap agreement with a group that cannot represent the true rights holders**, as it would legitimize this group and negatively and unjustly impact other rights holders who have not been included in these negotiations.

The proposed Agreement-in-Principle, a modern day treaty, is a permanent agreement which would effectively extinguish the title of a First Nation and would thereby deny future generations of their inherent rights as Indigenous Peoples. This is contrary to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), including articles: 3, 4, 8, 18, 20, 25, 26 and 27. The newly elected Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, has committed to adopt and respect the UNDRIP. Federal actions to proceed with proposing the Agreement-in-Principle is a direct contravention of this commitment. Intervening and properly addressing the numerous and increasing concerns voiced by

many First Nations with regards to this land claim presents Canada with a unique opportunity to fulfil its promises.

While it is explicitly referenced in the proposed agreement that the Indigenous rights of other First Nations will not be affected, our analysis of the practical application indicates that the ability to put these rights into practice will be adversely affected. Our ability to enter lands we have traditionally and continuously used for hunting, fishing, trapping and other harvesting, will be restricted and subject to provincial regulations. We have not consented to the provincial regulation of our rights and will not be subject to being referred to the AOO to arrange overlap agreements in this regard. The inevitable adverse impacts to these rights that are vital to our cultural identity and survival cannot be remedied by unequivocal antidotes such as financial compensation.

It is not forgotten amongst the Iroquois communities, that we have long-standing historical agreements that have been established between Nations to work cooperatively and in peace. These are Nation-to-Nation agreements that many Nations, including the Iroquois, Algonquin and Settler States have committed to and coexisted by. The AOO land claim negotiations, and proposed settlement, are a direct contradiction of these agreements. **The Iroquois Caucus hereby calls on all of these Nations to respect and adhere to protocols, obligations and commitments made by our Ancestors to work cooperatively and in peace.**

We believe that the proposed settlement, as it is currently drafted, causes great harm to the reconciliation and the evolution of Crown-Indigenous relationships. The agreement disregards the historical relations between Nations, sets an abysmal precedent for future land claims, and is detrimental to all First Nations who enter into this process. **The Iroquois Caucus and its member communities hold the preservation and protection of Iroquois rights and interests of paramount importance; we remain resolute in our opposition to the AOO Agreement-in-Principle, the ratification vote, and any pending final negotiations.**

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About the Iroquois Caucus:

The Iroquois Caucus is comprised of elected leaders from Akwesáhsne, Kahnawà:ke, Kanesatake, Oneida Nation of the Thames, Six Nations of the Grand River, Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte and Wahta.

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