

Wahnapiatae First Nation calls on Ontario to respect Treaty rights, halt Bill 5

Tuesday, June 3, 2025

Wahnapiatae First Nation is joining other First Nations across the province in opposing the lack of consultation and potential threat to its rights under Ontario's proposed Bill 5: Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act.

This Bill as proposed by the Ontario Government is designed to speed up resource project approvals, but does so by enabling its Ministers to approve "special economic zones" for businesses where many laws and requirements will no longer apply. As written, this could be seen as an attempt to override First Nations consultation and the need for free, prior, and informed consent.

"Wahnapiatae First Nation opposes any measure that threatens our inherent and Treaty rights, and for that reason, we oppose Bill 5," says Chief Larry Roque.

"We fully support responsible development and economic opportunities for our people, but this must be done in true partnership with us, and in a way that protects the natural gifts given to us by the Creator. As such, we and other First Nations should have been consulted in advance of the Bill, which should only be advanced in a way that is respectful, rather than being sped through the legislature overtop of our serious concerns."

In recent days, Ontario has proposed several amendments in response to widespread criticism of the Bill from First Nations, including the addition of language around respecting the duty to consult, and the addition of "Indigenous-led special economic zones." However, these are arriving at the very end of the process of passing the Bill, and provide too little time for First Nations experts to consider their impact, according to Chief Roque.

"The stated intent of the bill is to speed up business timelines, but it seems clear that the province's approach will actually have the opposite effect by poisoning relationships and leaving projects open to endless lawsuits by First Nations with few other options under this law. We join the call for the province to do the right thing and withdraw the Bill so that it may be advanced the right way with full participation by First Nations."

Respectfully, Chief Larry Roque



Wahnapiatae First Nation

Centre of Excellence
259 Taighwenini Trail Rd.
Capreol, ON P0M 1H0
(705) 858-0610

Norman Recollet Health Centre
259 Taighwenini Trail Rd.
Capreol, ON P0M 1H0
(705) 858-7700

NRHC Primary Care Clinic
170 Loonway Rd.
Capreol, ON P0M 1H0
(705) 858-7700

