

Chief negotiator visits Bancroft



Algonquin land claim chief negotiator for the province Doug Carr stands with a map of the County of Hastings. It displays where claim lands will be if all goes according to plan. Ontario's negotiating team includes representatives from the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, according to the province. / SARAH SOBANSKI Staff

By Sarah Sobanski

Land claimed by the Algonquins of Ontario in coming years will be subject to the same rules as any other private property, according to Ontario chief negotiator Doug Carr.

Carr, along with experts, hosted an open house on the claim's Draft Environmental Evaluation Report in Faraday Oct. 4. The event and report are a part of Ontario's plans to transfer lands to the Algonquins.

‘We’re doing public consultation in relation to environmental assessment which Ontario has to do by law whenever [it’s] looking at Crown land or changing the boundaries to the parks,’ said Carr.

He added, ‘The context here is that we reached an agreement-in-principle with the Algonquins and Canada which was signed by the chiefs and the ministers on Oct. 18, 2016. Now we’re a year into the next phase where we’re trying to settle this claim and that is the negotiation of the treaty.’

Carr estimated this phase of the negotiations is a ‘five-year process.’

The claim territory is 36,000 square kilometres and involves around 10,000 Algonquins. They’re represented at the negotiation table by elected individuals from 10 area communities including Bancroft. More than a million people live within the claim. This contributes to a diverse area filled with both private and Crown lands.

The current agreement will see 117,500 acres of Crown lands transferred to Algonquins and \$300 million given as ‘settlement capital’ by the federal and provincial governments. This includes rights to natural resources.

‘We’re interested in the potential impact that it might have on you and how you use and enjoy your property,’ said Carr at the open house.

‘For instance, one of the first things we look at is access. That land that we’ve chosen, is there some way that you get to your property that we don’t know about... So we need to adjust that.’

According to the province it ‘evaluates all known environmental effects, in areas such as access, industries, public utilities and business interests, recreational uses, adjacent land uses, natural environment and cultural environment.’ Ontario ‘must consult with the public and stakeholders who have an interest in, or may be affected by, the proposed transfer of lands.’

Feedback from the consultations will go to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry ‘to better understand whether [the province has] properly identified the environmental effects of the transfer of lands. [It] will summarize the feedback [it] receive[s] and how it has been addressed in the Final Environmental Evaluation Report.’

There are 10 proposed settlement lands in the county which include parcels in Madawaska Valley, Hastings Highlands, Bancroft and Carlow Mayo. They can be viewed **here**.

‘Bancroft has one little tiny spot, and it’s Crown land all around it. Nobody lives close to it,’ said Hastings Highlands Mayor Vivian

Bloom, who attended the open house while pointing at a displayed county map.

She turned to the proposed lands in Hastings Highlands, "Even if some of this property was butting up to mine, they have to follow the same planning, the same rules, everything as I do. I know no one is going to move in next door to me at the edge of the swamp and build a big hotel."

She added, "I really don't see in most areas where it's going to impact local residents. In fact, it's going to help them. Whatever they do, whether they come in and build on some of this property we're going to get property taxes from them which we don't now on Crown land."

"That's part of the deal, right," said Carr. "They need the services. They need someone to plow the road, pick up the garbage or whatever the municipal service is. That's what the taxes are used for."

Bancroft This Week asked then if it was the same as any other private owner buying or taking ownership of a piece of property. Carr said, "That's what we tried to do."

More information on the claim and how to comment is available [here](#). Consultations close Oct. 17.