

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

# **Fort McKay First Nation disappointed by Court decision but encouraged by government's response**

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Wednesday, February 19, 2020

Fort McKay— The Chief and Council of the Fort McKay First Nation released the following statement today.

“The Alberta’s Court of Queen’s Bench yesterday directed the Government of Alberta to make a decision regarding Prosper Petroleum’s Rigel project within ten days. That decision was deeply disappointing to the Fort McKay First Nation. Fort McKay was pleased, however, to learn late in the day that Alberta will appeal the decision.

“The Queen’s Bench instruction to Alberta is inappropriate because the Alberta Energy Regulator’s approval of the Rigel project is before the Court of Appeal and a decision whether that approval will stand is expected in the next 60 days. Fort McKay’s position is and has always been that the AER should not have approved the Rigel project in 2018 because Fort McKay was in the middle of negotiations with Alberta to protect its Moose Lake reserves and the Moose Lake area that have been ongoing for almost twenty years. Prosper’s project, as it is currently configured, would have significant adverse effects on the Moose Lake area.

“Alberta’s decision to appeal yesterday’s ruling signals to our members this government is serious about achieving a negotiated solution that acknowledges the importance of Moose Lake to Fort McKay.

“Less than three weeks ago, Fort McKay hosted Alberta’s Environment and Parks Minister, Jason Nixon, Indigenous Relations Minister, Rick Wilson, the CEO of Prosper and representatives from all area leaseholders at the *Moose Lake Together Summit* in Edmonton. A key outcome was the announcement made jointly by Fort McKay and the Government of Alberta of a three-month roadmap to complete and approve for immediate implementation the Moose Lake 10-Kilometre Access Management Plan. The plan will permit carefully managed, responsible development that also protects the exercise of Fort McKay’s Treaty rights and traditional land uses.

“As part of the three-month roadmap to complete the Moose Lake plan, Alberta and Fort McKay will hold monthly leadership meetings and have already begun weekly working sessions to which stakeholders from the oil sands industry, including Prosper, forestry sector and other Indigenous communities have been invited to ensure a high level of collaboration. We look forward to working with Alberta to resolve outstanding issues to balance economic, environmental, social and cultural objectives through the plan.

“We will be gathering with our community to review the Queen’s Bench decision and its implications as we wait for Alberta to file its appeal. We will apply to intervene in this action to support of the government’s application to overturn the Queen’s Bench decision. We are not deterred, and we will, as a community, explore all the steps we must take to protect Moose Lake, including **any and all available legal options to protect our constitutionally guaranteed Treaty rights and irreplaceable heritage.**”

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