

Statement of Bay of Quinte Conference of The United Church of Canada regarding the Algonquin and Local Residents Blockade of Uranium Prospecting near Sharbot Lake

As the regional body of the United Church of Canada representing 300 congregations, the Bay of Quinte Conference wishes to make the following statement regarding the ongoing blockade of uranium prospecting taking place since the end of June 2007 by Algonquin and non-First Nations people near Sharbot Lake.

To date, this has been a non-violent protest, and it is the desire and intention of the Algonquin and non-native protesters that it remain so and that a peaceful negotiated resolution be found. Therefore, we have written Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty asking him to:

- refrain from enforcing the court-ordered injunction to forcibly remove the Algonquin and non-native protesters;
- to consult with the Chiefs of the Ardoch Algonquin First Nation and the Sharbot Obaadjiwan Algonquin First Nation;
- to take immediate action to settle the outstanding land claim by the Algonquins upon this unceded territory and to resolve this dispute peaceably;
- immediately halt all exploration and development of uranium mining on disputed lands in Eastern Ontario; and
- conduct a review and complete overhaul of the Ontario Mining Act, given that as it stands, the Act allows prospecting, claim staking, and exploration without clear processes for meaningful consultation and consent from First Nations, municipalities or property owners..

In keeping with the stance of The United Church of Canada as a whole, we in the Bay of Quinte Conference stand alongside the First Nations peoples, local “settlers”, and their supporters both local and around the world, in opposing uranium exploration in the region on environmental, safety and legal grounds.

We commend the local members of the Ontario Provincial Police for their actions to date. At the same time, our members continue to hold this challenging confrontation in their prayers as we work towards a peaceful resolution.

The members of the delegation who met with Algonquin leaders on September 6, 2007 were Ms Bronwen Harman, President of Bay of Quinte Conference, Rev. Rodney Smith-Merkley, Chair, Dancing the Circle of Right Relations Action Group of Conference and minister of the Elgin-Portland Pastoral Charge, Rev. Elizabeth Foster, minister of the Rideau Pastoral Charge, Mr. David Milne, United Church member and representative of the Christian Peacemakers Team, and Rev. Dr. Nan Hudson, Conference Minister, Stewardship and Mission.

For further information, visit the Bay of Quinte Conference website www.bayofquinteconference.ca, the Ardoch Algonquin First Nation website www.aafna.ca, the Community Coalition Against Mining Uranium www.ccamu.ca, and The Frontenac News website www.newsweb.ca.

