



Tuesday, April 6, 2021

ERFN advances its commitment to self-determination and self-sufficiency by joining Denison Mines at the table to talk shared prosperity

Chief and Council of English River First Nation has signed a letter of intent with uranium company Denison Mines Corp., committing to entering discussions with Denison towards a shared prosperity agreement in relation to the proposed Wheeler River mine. At the end of a planned negotiation process, the ERFN members will ultimately decide, by way of a community referendum, whether to support the Wheeler River mine.

As part of a new relationship with Denison, ERFN has concurrently entered into an Exploration Agreement with the uranium company which sets out how the two sides will work together when it comes to Denison's current exploration activity occurring on ERFN's ancestral lands. The highlights of that agreement are set out in a schedule attached to this release.

Denison's Wheeler River project is the largest undeveloped uranium project in the eastern portion of the Athabasca Basin region and is located on ERFN lands. It can be found approximately 35 kilometres northeast of the Key Lake mill and 35 kilometres southwest of the McArthur River uranium mine.

Over the next several months, a negotiation table made up of Chief and Council representatives, Elders, and subject matter experts for ERFN, along with an environmental working group, will meet regularly to learn more about the proposed mine, participate in the Environmental Assessment process, and negotiate an agreement that would then be put to a ratification vote by the ERFN membership.

"As a First Nation driven by self-determination, we believe this negotiation process promotes ERFN interests, creates a positive relationship with Denison, and helps to ensure new uranium mining operators offer responsible and creative paths to wealth generation for all involved, while minimizing impacts to the lands and resources," says Chief Jerry Bernard.

The negotiation process will address:

- sustainable funding and possible equity ownership in Denison by ERFN;
- preferential hiring of ERFN members and preferential contracting with ERFN businesses;
- a collaborative process to ensure operational activities are respectful of ERFN rights; and
- environmental stewardship and traditional land use.

"We acknowledge and respect the rights of ERFN and are pleased to formalize our Company's effort to work with ERFN in the pursuit of achieving a genuine understanding of the interests of the Nation and meaningful mutual benefits from Denison's activities", says David Cates, President and Chief Executive Officer of Denison. "We feel strongly that the future of the Wheeler River Project will be greatly enhanced by partnership with ERFN – ensuring Indigenous knowledge regarding historical and contemporary land use, environmental knowledge, and environmental stewardship associated with ERFN's connection to this land, are all incorporated into the Environmental Assessment process and project designs. Together, Denison and ERFN are putting reconciliation principles into action and contributing to the important evolution of Indigenous and industry relationships in the province of Saskatchewan."

ERFN has retained its own, independent subject matter experts (legal, environmental, communications) who will work with ERFN leaders, staff, Elders, and knowledge keepers to fully examine the proposed mine and to ensure that any proposed shared prosperity agreement is leading edge and fair to ERFN. Denison has agreed to provide the funding required by ERFN for these resources.

Information will be shared with the ERFN membership every step of the way. The community is encouraged to visit erfn.net for more information and ongoing updates.

Schedule “A” Highlights of ERFN/Denison Exploration Agreement

As a way of better asserting jurisdiction over its ancestral lands, ERFN has entered into an exploration agreement with Denison, effective March 30, 2021. Exploration Agreements are commonplace in other regions of Canada and are used by First Nations as a way of obtaining a better line of sight on what is happening on their ancestral lands and, more importantly, ensuring that any exploration activity is undertaken responsibly while avoiding rights impacts and ensuring the early sharing of benefits.

ERFN’s agreement with Denison establishes ground rules, enables effective engagement, and provides for benefit sharing. It also commits Denison to negotiate with the objective of entering into a shared prosperity agreement with ERFN for any proposed mining projects.

The highlights of the ERFN/Denison Exploration Agreement are as follows:

- Denison agrees that ERFN is “the primary Aboriginal and Treaty rights holder” in much of the area where Denison is currently undertaking exploration activities – including for the Wheeler River project area
- ERFN agrees to “the prospect” of exploration activity continuing to take place on its ancestral lands by Denison, and agrees to a cooperative relationship whereby ERFN will not oppose Denison’s exploration activities or permits so long as Denison abides by the agreement
- Denison agrees to address all concerns raised by ERFN during consultations in relation to planned exploration activity. In turn, where ERFN is satisfied in any instance that Denison has addressed its concerns, then and only then ERFN will support the exploration activity in question
- Denison agrees to consult ERFN on all planned exploration activity in ERFN’s territory and agrees to provide ERFN with annual capacity funding to ensure ERFN has the resources necessary to properly engage with Denison and regulators for the purpose of evaluating and providing input on Denison’s planned activity
- Denison commits to ensuring best practices in terms of environmental standards. Denison agrees to hire an independent contractor (which we intend to be an ERFN band member), with input from and reporting to ERFN and Denison, to work as an environmental monitor who will help ensure that Denison’s activities “on the ground” are meeting high environmental standards, and ensuring any impacts to ERFN’s rights are avoided or minimized
- Denison agrees to preferentially hire ERFN members and preferentially contract with ERFN businesses
- Denison agrees to source applicable camp supplies from the ERFN general store in Beauval
- Denison agrees to make annual financial contributions to ERFN
- Denison agrees that it will not build a new mine in ERFN traditional territory without first negotiating in good faith towards an agreement with ERFN