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**PRIVILEGED, CONFIDENTIAL & WITHOUT PREJUDICE**

October 25, 2021

**Delivered via courier**

Impact Assessment Agency of Canada  
160 Elgin Street, 22<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H3

ATTENTION: Debra Sikora, Panel Chair

Dear Ms. Sikora,

**Re: Pays Plat First Nation & Marathon PGM & Copper Mine Project**

The Chief and Council of Pays Plat First Nation respectfully extends an invitation to the members of the Joint Review Panel to visit our community.

We understand that the panel's responsibilities pursuant to the proposed Marathon Palladium Project include consideration of Indigenous perspectives on the mine project. To accomplish this, we invite you to Pays Plat First Nation for an exchange of perspectives. We want to better understand your challenges as decision-makers. We want to share our view from the shore of Lake Superior, because it is the lens through which we, as a community, see the world and make our decisions.

When you come to Pays Plat First Nation, you will see both the past and the present. Our community members live in an ancient cradle of forests, water, mountains, and oral tradition. While our houses, services, and commercial businesses are new, we have been here since time immemorial.

We understand that the proponent, Generation PGM, is forward-thinking. We know that if we support the Marathon Palladium Project, we are, in a sense, encouraging technological innovation and providing economic opportunities for some of our community members. These potential benefits are not lost on us, nor do we believe that the panel will overlook them.

As a First Nation, we believe, and invite the panel to do the same, that the First Nations affected by the proposed Marathon Palladium Project face a dilemma which suggests that we know what we will lose. In reality, what Pays Plat First Nation stands to lose through the proposed project is unknown, irrespective of our ultimate decision

to either support or oppose it. All of the drawings, plans, and engineers' reports will not tell us what will happen to the land. These documents cannot show us how our way of life will change. For this reason, we urge the panel to consider consultation from our point of view, in Pays Plat First Nation.

Our lawyer has told us that we are entitled to a fairness throughout this process because our "*rights, privileges, or interests*" are engaged. We believe that it is important for the panel to come to Pays Plat First Nation to truly appreciate what it is we are afraid of losing. We want the panel to see the clean waters where we fish, and the places where we pick blueberries. We want the panel to understand that these things are not just hobbies, or what the government calls "Aboriginal Rights". For us, these things are our identity.

Pays Plat First Nation wants to participate in this process meaningfully. However, the Public Hearing Draft Procedures include some obstacles that would prevent us from doing so.

First, our community is isolated, and our internet is weak. Pays Plat First Nation does not have the bandwidth for community members, including Chief and Council, to effectively participate in video conferencing. While video conferencing may be convenient for some parties, it is effectively prohibitive for Pays Plat First Nation.

The second obstacle is the registration requirement. We believe that requiring community members to register in advance will act as a barrier to participation. Some of our community members have conflicted feelings about this situation and will not make the decision as to whether they wish to participate until shortly beforehand. Respectfully, we feel that nobody should be forced to declare their intention to attend the hearing in advance. In our view, this is an artificial requirement for what we understand to be a public process.

Thirdly, we want to ensure that the Panel is aware of our traditional commitments, so that the hearing is not scheduled for a time where Pays Plat First Nation is unavailable. We kindly request that the hearing not be held during either the months of July or October, 2022. In July, our community is holding a Powwow. This is an important community-wide event. In October, the moose hunt will be happening, keeping our community members busy.

We don't feel that these three obstacles mean that we should be excluded from the process, or that only others should be speaking for us. We bring these three concerns about the Public Hearing Draft procedures forward with our invitation to the panel, so that we can show that they are based in reality. Standing in Pays Plat First Nation may help the panel better understand our perspective.

What's more, we have been told by our lawyer that the Supreme Court of Canada recognizes that our perspective should not be ignored, simply because it cannot be expressed according to the Western norm:

*Oral histories reflect the distinctive perspectives and cultures of the communities from which they originate and should not be discounted simply because they do not conform to the expectations of the non-aboriginal perspective.*

As an oral tradition community, without an opportunity to speak directly to the panel, Pays Plat First Nation members cannot accurately and completely convey their messages regarding the Marathon Palladium Project. A community visit will give more community members the opportunity to voice their opinions, both formally and informally.

We are agreeable to any and all Covid-19 precautions, including masking and social distancing. We ask that only individuals having received two doses of a Covid-19 vaccine attend.

Our invitation to the panel is an open one. In an effort to convey our view to the panel, we will share with you the places and traditions which inform our decision-making. We trust that you will consider our offer. We would welcome a further conversation about scheduling and logistics.

Yours in interest,  
  
D. Mushquash  
Pays Plat First Nation

Per: Chief Mushquash