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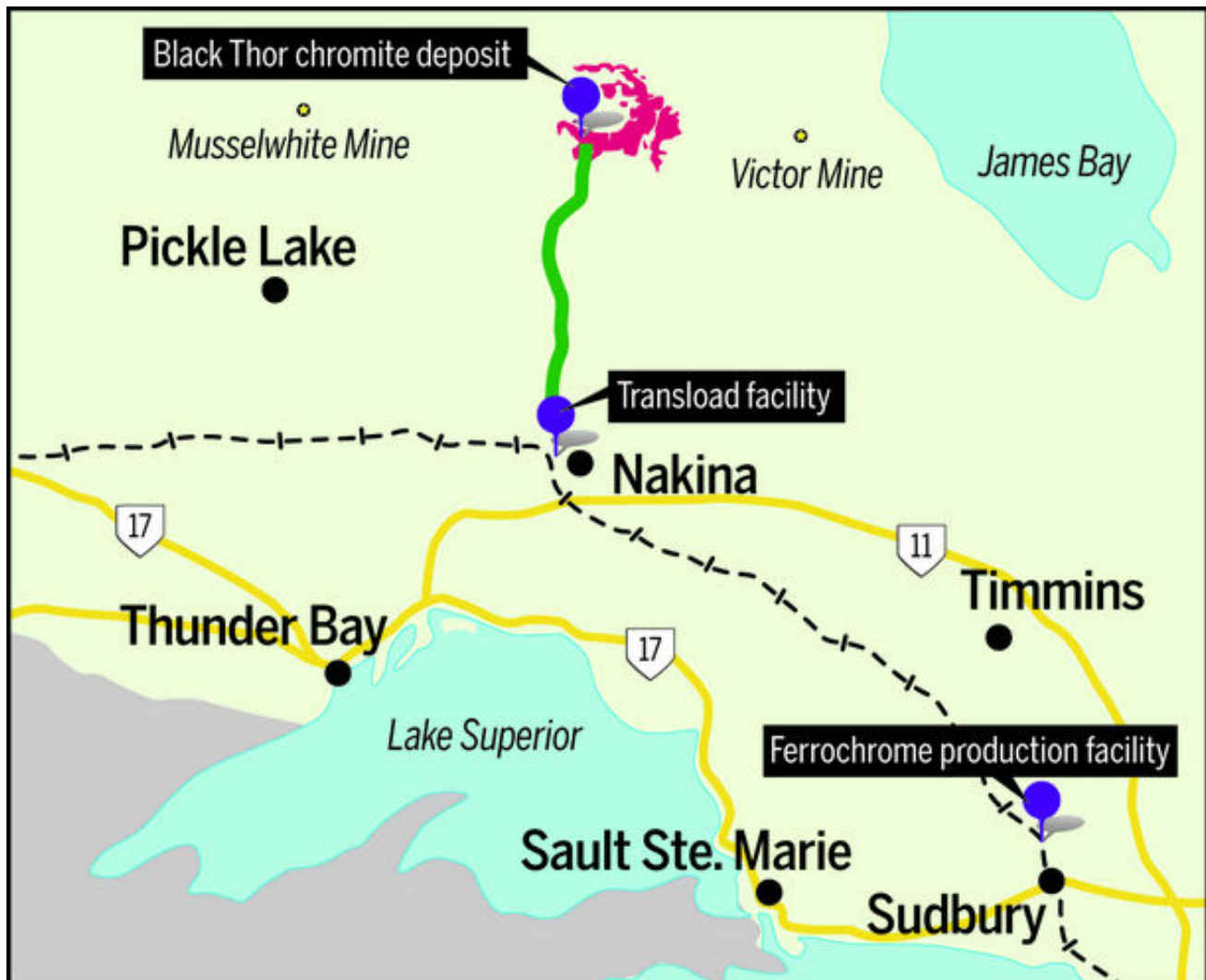
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## NEWS LOCAL

# Wildlands League wants freeze on Ring of Fire development

By Carol Mulligan, Sudbury Star

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SHERRI LAVIGNE The Sudbury Star

Black Thor chromite deposit

The Wildlands League is calling on the Ontario government to undertake a region-wide environmental assessment of lands in the Ring of Fire, rather than allow piecemeal assessments by companies that have staked claims in the area.

The environmental organization has published a 12-page newsletter, urging Ontarians to insist the provincial and federal

governments not issue any more approvals to companies such as Cliffs Natural Resources, Noront Resources and KWG Resources until a thorough environmental assessment is complete.

It wants that assessment to include consultation with members of First Nations and other communities who will be impacted by mining in the Ring of Fire -- and that includes Sudburians.

Cliffs Natural Resources has chosen the former Moose Mine site north of Capreol as the location for its \$1.8-billion ferrochrome processing plant to process ore from its Black Thor deposit.

Anna Baggio, director of conservation land use planning for the Wildlands League, said her organization has received calls from residents in northeastern Ontario and elsewhere who are worried about the impact mining the rich chromite deposits will have on the environment.

The Wildlands League isn't anti-development, said Baggio, but it wants the environmental assessment of the area done correctly.

The Ring of Fire and the area around it "goes beyond any single community, beyond any single watershed," said Baggio. "We're talking about a whole region."

That's why planning should be done on a region-wide basis.

"What do we want it to look like? It can't just be about mining, but transmission lines, healthy water and trapping areas."

The league is calling on the province to show leadership so people with an interest in the Ring of Fire have a place to "put their visions together," so everyone gets "a kick at that can," said Baggio.

The Ring of Fire, 500 kilometres northeast of Thunder Bay in the James Bay Low-lands, is an area 5,120 kilometres in size. Twenty-one companies hold 9,000 claims there. Two are developing mine plans and another is planning a mine and a railway corridor.

The value of its chromite, nickel, copper, zinc, gold and palladium deposits is \$60 billion -- and the area could be mined for a century.

"We're talking about the future of a whole part of Ontario. The stakes are so high. We just have to get this right," said Baggio.

More than one politician, including Premier Kathleen Wynne, has said the same thing.

When she hears that, Baggio said she wonders what it means.

"You've given me the first good platitude. Now tell me how you're going to do it right," said Baggio. "That's my concern when I hear politicians talk about speeding up development. That's been tried before and failed. Let's not go down that path."

As well as considering the environment, the Wildlands League is calling for sound decision-making after consultation with municipalities.

"We can't just have closed-door decisions that are going to benefit companies and the rest of us are going to have to live with them," she said.

The league wants the province to spearhead a vision for the Ring of Fire, including the impact of mining it. Then resource companies could slide in project-level environmental assessments.

"In the absence of a great vision, you can't plan by these company-driven EAs. That's just crazy," said Baggio.

The league is calling on the province to moderate an honest discussion about the costs and benefits of developing the Ring of Fire.

"The public needs to know that we're going to kick the tires on" developing the Ring of Fire; that experts are going to ask questions and they'll be able to get answers, and it won't just be what individual companies say is the answer."

Baggio points out the Far North Science Advisory Panel recommended three years ago that a regional process be undertaken to develop the Ring of Fire.

"If they had done it back in 2010, we'd be done by now," said Baggio.

The Wildlands League, the Ontario arm of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, usually publishes a four-page newsletter, Wild Notes, but expanded it for this special edition.

"The content was so rich, the material was so important, the maps were so key that we just had to make it 12 pages," said Baggio.

Baggio is available to speak to groups about the Wildlands League's take on Ring of Fire development.

League members have met with government officials and representatives of mining companies with claims in the area. Copies of the newsletter were sent to companies with claims in the Ring of Fire, and there haven't been any complaints, said Baggio.

The Wildlands League's mission is to combine credible science, visionary solutions and bold communications, it says on its website.

For more on the league or to contact Baggio, go to [www.wildlandsleague.org](http://www.wildlandsleague.org).

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