

Québec City, March 26, 2008

COURTESY TRANSLATION

The Honourable Claude Béchar
Minister
Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune
5700, 4^e Avenue Ouest
Bureau A-308
Québec (Québec) GQH 6R1

Subject: The Green Paper on the Forest

Dear Minister Béchar:

Last February 25th, you wrote me asking for comments from the Cree-Québec Forestry Board (CQFB) concerning the Green Paper on the Forest which you made public on February 14, 2008. The present is to inform you that the Board members attended a presentation of the document given by representatives of your Ministère, and had the opportunity to be informed and to ask several questions about its content. During the Board meeting on last March 25th, the members agreed on unanimously to inform you about the following comments.

First, the Board wants to underline that this draft modification of the Québec Forestry Regime is ambitious and suggests major changes regarding forest management in Québec. Several of the given proposals, although innovative, are worth to an exhaustive examination and this, in a very specific manner in the framework of the application of the *Agreement regarding the New Relationship between the gouvernement du Québec and the Crees of Québec*. As you know, on the Agreement's territory exists, since 2002, an adapted forestry regime which was agreed on between the signatory parties. Therefore, all modification to the adapted forestry regime need to be negotiated in due form between the gouvernement du Québec and the Cree of Québec.

However, following a first analysis of the document, here are some important comments. First, all aspects of the regional governance, meaning the decentralization towards regional organizations of numerous responsibilities linked to the forest management, ask for a complete analysis by taking into account the provisions of the adapted forestry regime and of the nation to nation relationship established in the *Agreement*. The current draft does not mention on any account the existence and the reality of the *Agreement* on the treaty land territory.

In addition, the adapted forestry regime in force on the territory of the *Agreement* includes numerous provisions based on spacial references and processes which are the basics of the relation that must prevail between the forest managers, who are at present the TSFMA beneficiaries, and the tallymen. The contribution of the Crees in different planning and managing processes of the forest management activities is the central issue of the *Agreement*. For that purpose, the reform presented in the Green Paper leads to several questionings as for the future of this privileged relationship and the bond of imputability which ensue from it. The involvement of new actors with different responsibilities calls therefore for particular analysis in the framework of the *Agreement*. Also, the zoning of the territory to various purposes and, in particular for the intensive silviculture and ecosystem-based management, brings up major questions linked to the objectives and provisions of the *Agreement* on which the Green Paper cannot answer.

Regarding the aspect of the increase of the forest productivity and economic spin-off of this reform, the document is incomplete and does not allow to judge on the size of the anticipated benefits. Nevertheless, it is interesting to notice that the native communities could increasingly profit, on an economic and working level, from the proposed reform. An exhaustive analysis on this matter should be relevant considering the expected labour shortage in the forestry sector, in particular in distant areas as on the *Agreement's* territory.

On the basis of these comments, the members of the Cree-Québec Forestry Board recommend you, Minister Bécharde, to set up as soon as possible a multipartite working group to examine all aspects of this draft reform in the framework of *La Paix des braves* and more specifically of its adapted forestry regime. In this manner, the Government and the Cree party will have basic information, as factual as possible, in order to be guided in future discussions and negotiations.

To end, I insist to point out the importance that, when tabling proposals of such magnitude, the parties and the Board should have the necessary time in order to advice you on the said projects. Please be assured, Minister Bécharde, of our complete collaboration.

Yours truly,

Jean-Pierre Gauthier
Chairman of the Board