



Québec City, October 15, 2012

Mr. Matthew Coon Come
Grand Chief
Grand Council of the Crees
(Eeyou Istchee)
2 Lakeshore Road
Nemaska, QC J0Y 3B0

Ms. Martine Ouellet
Minister
Ministère des Ressources naturelles
Ministère des Ressources naturelles
5700, 4^e Avenue Ouest, A 301
Québec, QC G1H 6R1

Subject: Advice to the parties on the follow up to the conclusions of the expert group's report on the woodland caribou situation on the territory of the Adapted Forestry Regime on Paix des Braves territory.

Dear Grand Chief:
Dear Minister:

At our last meeting—on July 11, 2012—Board members discussed the important issue of woodland caribou status on *Agreement* territory. These discussions were held in light of the findings and recommendations of the recent report of the expert group¹ mandated by the parties to the *Agreement* to shed scientific light on the Nord-du-Québec woodland caribou habitat and population.

In keeping with the Board's mandate, the responsibilities conferred on it by the parties and the adapted forestry regime in effect on *Agreement* territory, this advice is designed to give the parties the Board's advice on how to follow up on the conclusions of the expert group's report.

The report, which was tabled on June 15, 2012, contains the most up-to-date information available on woodland caribou in *Agreement* territory. The conclusions are clear about the vulnerability of the species. The findings are alarming in terms of the population's decline, the territory's capacity to offer a habitat suitable for woodland caribou and the need to intervene quickly, on several fronts, to maximize the chances for successfully promoting the species' recovery in the region.

Based on their specific mandate, the experts reiterated a fact whose truth is recognized throughout the scientific community, namely that habitat disturbance (through forestry

¹ RUDOLPH, Tyler D. et al, (2012). *Status of Woodland Caribou (Rangifer tarandus caribou) Boreal ecotype in Northern Quebec*

activities among others) is the most important factor that has had, and continues to have, a direct impact on woodland caribou status. Moreover, they highlighted the fact that some of the conditions and provisions of the adapted forestry regime, such as mosaic cutting, dispersion of cutting blocks and development of the road network, have increased stress on the territory's woodland caribou. They hold that the chances for successful woodland caribou conservation on *Agreement* territory depend, among other things, on the parties' ability to agree—in the portion of the territory in question—on a forest management approach whose provisions correspond to the species' needs and differ from the current management model defined by the adapted forestry regime.

In March 2005, under the *Act respecting threatened or vulnerable species* (1989), the Gouvernement du Québec assigned "vulnerable species" status to the woodland caribou. In 2007, Québec passed the *Sustainable Development Act*, which defines many principles that must be taken into account by players involved in development-related intervention. These principles include biodiversity preservation, environmental protection and precaution. Remember that one of the three key objectives of the adapted forestry regime seeks "greater integration of concerns relating to sustainable development."

Woodland caribou status is a biodiversity and sustainable development issue. The species' precarious situation and the need to aim for a net reduction in disturbances within its identified range in the territory are the two main reasons mentioned by the experts to justify concrete and prompt actions.

Since forestry activities have a major impact on woodland caribou habitat, the Board feels that the upcoming generation of forest plans is an opportunity to be seized to pursue forestry in the territory while incorporating the woodland caribou's precarious situation into the management approach implemented. In this context, the Board recommends:

- that the parties develop as soon as possible a global action plan designed to implement woodland caribou recovery measures based on the expert group's report, and any other information that might be useful;
- that this action plan be ready in time for the measures it contains to be integrated into the new strategic forestry planning scheduled to take effect as of 2014.

Since forestry activities must fall under a sustainable forest management framework, the Board recommends that the parties:

- develop modifications to the current adapted forestry regime's provisions to promote woodland caribou recovery on Paix des Braves territory.

The Board is aware that deciding on the measures to implement involves difficult choices that will have potentially significant economic, social and environmental impacts, which will

have to be assessed before decisions are made. However, because action must be taken immediately, the Board feels that these assessments should not prevent the action plan and the measures it contains from being finalized and available for the next strategic forestry planning process.

While waiting for the woodland caribou recovery measures to be proposed in the above-mentioned pending global action plan, the Board recommends:

- that a precautionary approach be implemented in the context of any new forestry planning or any modification to existing forest plans that should come until then.

Any new intrusion into areas used or presumably used by woodland caribou should be minimized. In the very near future, the parties must agree on mitigation measures to be applied in the intervention sectors in question.

At our July 11 meeting, the Cree party informed the Board that the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee) and the Cree Trappers' Association recently adopted a resolution moving toward an awareness campaign and encouraging the cease of Woodland Caribou harvest. This initiative taken by the Crees was further stressed given the situation described in the experts' report. The Board applauds this decision, which is a good example of responsible stewardship. The Board however insists on the importance to complement this first action with other concrete actions which may involve making difficult decisions if the real objective is a turnaround in the woodland caribou's situation on *Agreement* territory.

For its part, in the context of its responsibilities, the Board will continue to review forest management plans to ensure that the woodland caribou issue is incorporated into them and to reflect the recommendations it has made in this advice until the parties have agreed on measures to adopt to promote the species' recovery on *Agreement* territory.

Sincerely,

The Chairman of the Board


Albin Tremblay

Cc. Mr. Daniel Breton, Minister, Développement durable, de la Faune et de l'Environnement