

COURTESY TRANSLATION

Québec, April 29, 2013

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

Subject: Advice on the transitional planning process for the interim year 2013-2014

Dear Ms. Minister,

In the context of the negotiations between the parties with a view to harmonizing the Québec forest regime and the forestry regime governed by the *Agreement concerning a new relationship between the Gouvernement du Québec and the Crees of Québec*, the parties have agreed on a transitional planning process for the interim year 2013-2014. This process requires the Cree-Québec Forestry Board, if it deems appropriate to inform the Minister of proposals, concerns and comments related to annual plans, especially systemic issues related to them.

After reviewing the 2013-2014 interim plans and related documents, the Board is, on the whole, satisfied with the planning process undertaken by the Ministère des Ressources naturelles (MRN) and considers that it is in keeping with the objectives and spirit of the Agreement.

More specifically, the Board notes the efforts made by the MRN to directly integrate the harmonization measures agreed to with the Crees into the plans and include the sectors that were previously harmonized but not harvested by the industry during the five-year period 2008-2013 to planning. Similarly, the Board notes MRN planners' concern to avoid the sectors targeted by roads subject to the environmental assessment procedure and the protected area projects tabled by the Crees.

The Board would also like to point out the quality of the review work done by the joint working groups. Their respective analysis reports show their dedication in implementing the participation process inherent in forest planning and reflect the professionalism of the work they have done in validating the plans.

The analysis of the interim plans has also raised certain systemic issues that the Ministère des Ressources naturelles will have to follow-up in concertation with the Cree party.

To begin with, in several forest management units (FMU), the Board notes a significant increase in the planned harvesting of hardwoods in response to potential demand to supply the Fortress Paper plant project in Lebel-sur-Quévillon. The Board points out the scarcity and importance of hardwood stands and mixed stands in the territory as wildlife habitats and believes that measures must be implemented in order to prevent their increased harvesting from becoming a problematic issue. Therefore, the Board recommends that the MRN ensure that a separate management approach is developed for these stands, as stipulated in Schedule C-3 of the Agreement's adapted forestry regime.

The Board wrote to you on October 15, 2012 regarding follow-up to the conclusions drawn by the groups of experts on the territory's woodland caribou situation. The Board notes an effort on the part of MRN planners to introduce interim precautionary measures in a number of sectors of key significance for the woodland caribou. However, as a new phase of developing integrated forest management plans approaches, the Board reiterates the importance of agreeing on a global woodland caribou recovery plan for the territory on which the parties have reached a consensus. The Board notes that very little progress has been made in this regard following the expert group's work and can only encourage the parties to act in a timely manner.

Further, MRN planners and joint working group members have reported that riparian buffer strip protection proved a sensitive subject for many tallymen during the planning process. Indeed, these Tallymen ask for additional protections to those provided for in the Agreement; primarily in relation to the width of the buffers and partial cutting permitted in these protections. The Board has been informed that the parties are looking for a solution to this issue in the context of their negotiations targeting harmonization of the forestry regimes. In relation to its mandate to assess the adapted forestry regime's implementation, the Board will monitor solution that will be agreed upon by the parties to validate its effectiveness and, if necessary, recommend avenues for improvement.

Finally, we note that, for reasons of confidentiality, the Crees' planning support maps could not be used systematically by MRN planners in the context of the interim plans. Analysis of the plans and joint working group reports nevertheless show us that all of the players involved would have liked to access the maps upstream of the planning process. The Board considers the planning support maps a critical tool for better taking the Crees' concerns into account and encourages the parties to settle issues of confidentiality as soon as possible so that this tool can be available in the next phase involved in the integrated forest management plans' development.

I hope that this analysis of the interim measures and the resulting recommendations will be helpful to the parties in the context of the implementation of a new harmonized regime of the agreement to be implemented in the coming months.

I invite the parties to give it the appropriate attention and assure you that I remain available to provide any information that might seem useful or necessary.

Sincerely,

[Original signed]

Albin Tremblay
Chairman of the Board

c.c. Mr. Matthew Coon Come, Grand Chief, GCC-EI