



Secrétariat
de l'Assemblée des
Premières Nations
du Québec
et du Labrador

Secretariat of the
Assembly of the
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**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**AFNQL welcomes the agreement to protect the Boreal forest and reaffirm
the rights of First Nations on the territory**

Wendake, Thursday, May 20, 2010 – The Assembly of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL) appreciates the initiative concerning an agreement for the conservation of the boreal forest announced yesterday between forestry companies and environmental groups. “The intentions are good but must obviously be backed up by a genuine and tangible willingness to involve the First Nations that have rights over these lands” declared the Chief of the AFNQL, Ghislain Picard.

The parties agreed on a moratorium on the exploitation of 29 million hectares of boreal forest spanning six provinces, including Quebec. The aim is to, among others things; ensure the preservation and restoration of threatened species such as the woodland caribou - a species very important to the First Nations and a symbol of biodiversity in the boreal forest

The AFNQL appreciates that the agreement recognizes that the Aboriginal people have ancestral rights, treaty rights and a title protected by the Constitution, as well as legitimate interests and aspirations. The agreement is “intended to be without prejudice to, and in accordance with, those rights and title. The Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC), FPAC members, and ENGOS (environmental non-governmental organizations) believe both successful forest conservation and business competitiveness require effective involvement of Aboriginal peoples and their governments. The signatories are committed to such involvement taking place in a manner that is respectful of and engages these Aboriginal rights, title, interests, and aspirations.”

“It is rare that forestry companies publicly recognize the First Nations’ rights to our ancestral territories and agree to comply. We hope that this commitment will be respected and that this will be reflected in their daily actions on the territory,” emphasized Chief Ghislain Picard who reminds that First Nations are as governments who will continue to defend their interests and their rights over their land, despite this agreement. “Our often justified concerns, towards the forest industry and some environmental groups will not fade away because of this agreement”.

About the AFNQL:

The AFNQL is a regional organization that brings together the 43 Chiefs of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador. For more information, visit: www.apnql-afnql.com.

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