



Media Release

## Forestry as a northern way of life is more than a stereotype, it is a reality lived by many

Alliance of First Nations and Non-First Nations respond to misleading statements attacking an independent and science-based approach to species at risk policy.

**February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018** - In a February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018 Toronto Star op-ed, it was stated, *“There was a time — decades ago — when putting the demands of large forestry companies above the interests of everyone else may have been a good political strategy. It certainly isn’t now.”* We would like to take this opportunity to set the record straight, introduce the authors of this misleading article to *“everyone else”*, and recognize the efforts of Premier Wynne and the Ontario government for taking steps towards a responsible approach to species at risk policy development.

An Alliance of First Nation and non-First Nation leaders representing rights holders, stakeholders, municipal leaders, unions, and Ontario's forest sector was formed in January 2018 to defend a way of life, with a mandate to grow the responsible use of natural resources in northern and rural Ontario.

On January 19<sup>th</sup> the Alliance was pleased to see the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) had published a regulation proposal for a period of 45 days open for public comment. If approved, this proposal will allow time for an independent panel, comprised of stakeholders and rights holders, to provide advice on species at risk in forest management and help MNRF in achieving a *“better understanding of the impacts of climate change, the cumulative effects of all activity on a broad, dynamic landscape and a much better appreciation for the socio-economic implications.”* The Alliance believes that, while the regulation should be in place for 5-years instead of 2, this proposal is a positive step being taken by the government.

Intentional or not, the authors of the February 12<sup>th</sup> op-ed have dealt a blow to the vulnerable communities and First Nations who will be disproportionately impacted by the proposed policy. The Alliance questions why the authors are actively working against the establishment of an independent panel designed to conserve species at risk, while also providing an opportunity for First Nation consultation and accommodation.

*“Accusations and misinformation by mainstream scientific activists and crown representatives patronize us as First Nations and discredit our values. This further entrenches a colonial and paternalistic approach that has long kept Canada divided. The authors of this article continue to remind us that we still have a long way to go in achieving reconciliation,”* said Chief Edward Wawia from Red Rock Indian Band. *“The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People states that Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development and use of their lands, territories and other resources. It is not clear to me why these individuals are not supportive of a process that will enable this to happen. It is a sad day for us when we are left out of a critical conversation by those who claim to speak on our behalf and further claim they know best.”*

The Toronto Star op-ed also stated, *“Forestry jobs will always have a role to play in our economy, and for that we are glad. But why has the province accepted the portrayal that logging jobs are central to our “northern way of life?” and that, “Perpetuating this stereotype — that our communities are merely Toronto’s hinterland — suggests that both the premier and at least some voices in the logging industry are increasingly out of touch with the values of northern voters.”*

NOMA President and Mayor of Shuniah, Wendy Landry, stated, “the regulation proposal demonstrates that the Premier has heard voices that go well beyond the forest industry. These include Mayors, First Nations and Chiefs, unions, licensed professionals, and chambers of commerce. This issue should not be framed as a stereotype, but the reality in which we live every day.” Mayor Landry continued, “While we are still very concerned this will require much more than only the 2-years proposed, we believe that the Ontario government is taking the responsible first step.”

President of FONOM and Mayor of Kapuskasing, Al Spacek, made similar comments, “Decisions on policy needs to be informed by the people who are most impacted. Arguments presented by those with special interests and no skin in the game can not be viewed as credible. This is our own backyard, and we deserve to have a say in the policy that governs it. We see the proposal as a positive and measured approach.”

Jamie Lim, President and CEO of the Ontario Forest Industries Association, concluded by saying, “If we truly want to strengthen our forest sector, honour a duty to consult and accommodate with First Nations, and strengthen Ontario’s middle class, government policy needs to support current operations and provide consistent, reliable and affordable access to wood fibre. The Alliance is hopeful that government will finalize and approve the current proposal in order to work towards achieving these important goals.”

- 30 -

Wendy Landry  
Mayor of Shuniah  
President of NOMA  
807-626-6686

Mayor Al Spacek  
Town of Kapuskasing  
President and FONOM  
(705) 335-0001

Chief Ed Wawia  
Red Rock Indian Band  
(807) 887-2510

Jamie Lim  
President & CEO  
OFIA  
(416) 368-6188