



Bingwi Neyaashi
Anishinaabek



Media Release

Ontario Government Provides Window of Opportunity to Get Species at Risk Policy Right

Alliance says Despite Meaningful Progress, the Federal Government Could Now Derail Plans

April 11th, 2018 - An Alliance of First Nation and non-First Nation leaders were pleased to see Premier Wynne and the Ontario Government have clearly listened to their concerns and are moving forward with a two-year extension to the current regulation for forest management under the provincial Endangered Species Act (ESA). However, the Alliance is now calling on Ontario's cabinet ministers to ask Federal Natural Resource and Environment Ministers for more time in developing the right strategy for Ontario.

On April 10th, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) finalized a decision that will allow time for an independent panel, comprised of stakeholders and rights holders, to provide advice on species at risk in forest management and to assist MNR 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.”*

Mayor Wendy Landry of Shuniah and President of NOMA said, “We are very appreciative of this decision made by Premier Wynne and the Ontario Government. While we are still concerned that this will require much more time than the 2 years, this is a positive first-step towards supporting our communities in Northern and Rural Ontario. Forestry is our way of life and we look forward to shaping the policy that governs it.”

“We are grateful for this announcement as the cumulative impact of these species can have a dire impact on our forestry-dependent communities. We look forward to seeing species at risk policy filtered through a northern and rural lens,” added Mayor Ron Holman of Rideau Lakes Township and Chair of ROMA.

Along with the final ESA decision, The Alliance continues to look forward to MNR announcing the establishment of an independent panel designed to conserve species at risk, while also providing an opportunity for First Nations consultation and accommodation.

Chief Edward Wawia of Red Rock Indian Band said, “We look forward to the Ontario Government including First Nations in the development of ESA policy moving forward. Traditional ecological knowledge has largely been ignored in the past, but I believe that this future announcement is a responsible step in working towards reconciliation.” He continued, “Our expectation is that the process will be open and transparent, with well-defined steps identified.”

President of FONOM and Mayor of Kapuskasing, Al Spacek, stated, “We have been asking government to recognize that these issues go beyond the forest industry, and it is very encouraging to see that the voices of The Alliance are being heard. These policies impact us as Mayors, Indigenous leaders, unions, practitioners, and chambers of commerce. By working collectively with government through this panel, we hope to find a long-term solution that will provide positive outcomes for our communities, the forestry businesses that have been established, and the jobs and families that depend on them.”

On March 19th, 2018, Alberta’s Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister of Energy, and Minister of Agriculture and Forestry signed a joint letter to Minister McKenna and Minister Carr, asking them for more time to develop the right strategy for caribou management in Alberta.

Jamie Lim, President and CEO of the Ontario Forest Industries Association, said, “We strongly encourage Ontario cabinet ministers to write a similar and supportive joint letter to ensure long-term success on species at risk policy within our own jurisdiction. This would include a redoubling of efforts to work with industry to develop solutions that avoid the imposition of a Federal Protection Order or Section 11 Conservation Agreement.” Lim concluded by saying, “If the Federal Government steps into traditional and Provincial lands and prescribes how forests will be managed, there will be a very real negative impact to the regional economies of Ontario. The 57,000 hardworking men and women directly employed by forestry across Ontario are relying on us to get this right.”

- 30 -

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