

# JOINT STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Northeastern Ontario leaders, industry and conservationists collaborate on promising plan for the Abitibi River Forest**

COCHRANE, ONTARIO—Five years ago, leaders from across Northeastern Ontario came together to develop a plan for the long-term future and sustainability of the Abitibi River Forest. First Nation leaders, mayors, forestry industry representatives, and conservationists found common ground and developed a grassroots, consensus-driven approach that responded to Northeastern Ontario's priorities, namely:

- Protecting the sustainable jobs and regional economy, particularly in the forestry and natural resources sector associated to an entire way of life;
- Conserving the habitat of the Kesagami Range boreal caribou;
- Honouring and respecting First Nation Peoples of Northeastern Ontario; and
- Respecting local municipalities and their residents.

The proposed plan provides a science-based sustainable approach to the management of the Abitibi River Forest, developed with an informed northern perspective. It establishes and maps three distinct "zones" within the forest. Collectively, the alternative model ensures a substantial, high-quality wood supply to provide long-term security for Northeastern Ontario's forestry industry, while providing for the conservation of habitat important to the sustainability of healthy boreal woodland caribou populations.

In recognition of the support the alternative model has received for its forward-thinking direction from the Ontario Government and the unprecedented nature of industry, environmental, First Nations and municipal leaders collaborating on the development of this innovative model, the Parties are re-affirming the need to continue to move forward. Consistent with the letter from the Ontario Minister of Natural Resources citing the inclusion of this alternative model in the upcoming forest management planning process, we are seeking affirmation and support of early action including this. Further delay will continue to undermine both the socio-economic and environmental sustainability of Northeastern Ontario, while threatening the historical way of life dependant on it.

All signatories urge the Government of Ontario to join us in this effort and move forward without delay as we demonstrate sound conservation of endangered species and other environmental values, while protecting socio-economic interests on the Abitibi River Forest and the region as a whole in the spirit of reconciliation.

Signed,



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