



June 22, 2018

Dear Minister McKenna, Premiers Couillard and Notley, and Premier-Designate Ford:

Canada's boreal forest is an iconic ecosystem. Its immense value includes its cultural significance to Indigenous Peoples and communities across Canada, its rich biodiversity, and its carbon sequestration. Products from this forest make their way into items used around the world every day. As companies that rely on forest products, we look to sustainable sources for our purchasing decisions. If managed with enforceable protections, Canada's boreal forest could provide us with a responsible option for our products. However, we are concerned by the lack of action by Canada's federal and provincial governments to protect the habitat of the threatened boreal woodland caribou: a species whose population is in decline, and whose health is considered to be indicative of the overall state of the Canadian boreal ecosystem.¹ **We write to urge you to develop and implement plans in 2018 that would legally protect critical boreal caribou habitat² from degradation.**

Companies that use forest materials have a significant stake in ensuring that these materials are harvested responsibly. We are concerned that caribou habitat and boreal

¹ Environment and Climate Change Canada, "Action Plan for the Woodland Caribou (Rangifer Tarandus Caribou), Boreal Population, in Canada – Federal Actions," 2018, <http://www.registrelep-sararegistry.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=2FEAAC82-1>.

² For more on "critical habitat," see Environment Canada, "Recovery Strategy for the Woodland Caribou (Rangifer Tarandus Caribou), Boreal Population, in Canada," 2012, https://www.registrelep-sararegistry.gc.ca/virtual_sara/files/plans/rs_caribou_boreal_caribou_0912_e1.pdf.

caribou populations are rapidly declining in Canada.³ Boreal caribou habitat protections would not only safeguard areas used by threatened species; they would have significant benefits for Indigenous Peoples and climate change mitigation, and would protect vulnerable areas of one of the earth's last great intact forests. Moreover, these plans could build on collaborative initiatives that Indigenous Peoples, industry, municipal leaders, and conservation groups have already launched in different parts of the country.⁴

In 2012, following extensive consultations across the country, Canada's federal government took an important step by asking the country's provinces and territories to prepare boreal caribou habitat protection plans by October 2017. Last year, major U.S. and international companies urged Canada's provinces to create these habitat protection plans.⁵ However, the deadline passed without provinces implementing mandatory and enforceable protections for caribou habitat.⁶ **To help reassure U.S. and international companies that materials from Canada's boreal forest have been obtained sustainably and without controversy, we ask you to create and implement boreal caribou habitat protection plans in close partnership with Indigenous Peoples in 2018.**

By protecting the boreal caribou, you will conserve critical areas of the boreal ecosystem. Today, provincial decisions to expand logging into new areas threaten both boreal caribou habitat, and some of the last intact traditional territories of many Indigenous Peoples. In addition, much remaining intact boreal caribou habitat overlaps with large carbon stores in the boreal forest;⁷ protecting these areas from widespread industrial degradation would support the forest's ability to continue acting as a global carbon storehouse. Safeguarding boreal caribou habitat would provide a key opportunity for

³ Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, "COSEWIC Assessment and Status Report on the Caribou Rangifer Tarandus, Newfoundland Population, Atlantic-Gaspésie Population, Boreal Population in Canada - Species at Risk Public Registry," 2014, http://www.registrelep-sararegistry.gc.ca/document/default_e.cfm?documentID=2769.

⁴ E.g., see: "Wildlands League Says it Gave Ontario a Plan to Protect Boreal Caribou Habitat- 5 Years Ago," *CBC News*, November 1, 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/caribou-boreal-species-protect-wildlands-1.4381956>.

⁵ In October 2017, Amy's Kitchen Incorporated; Ben & Jerry's; Greystone Books; H&M; Kimberly-Clark Corporation; Liturgy Training Publications; The Procter & Gamble Company; and Rose International, Inc. wrote a letter urging Canada's federal and provincial governments to protect caribou habitat: <https://www.benjerry.com/files/live/sites/systemsite/files/whats-new/6925-protect-woodland/provincial-caribou-plans-letter.pdf>

⁶ Environment and Climate Change Canada, "Report on the Progress of Recovery Strategy Implementation for the Woodland Caribou (Rangifer Tarandus Caribou), Boreal Population in Canada for the Period 2012 to 2017," Species at Risk Act Recovery Strategy Series (Ottawa, October 2017), <http://registrelep-sararegistry.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=7037FCE4-1>.

⁷ Matt Carlson, Jeff Wells, and Gina Roberts, "The Carbon the World Forgot: Conserving the Capacity of Canada's Boreal Forest Region to Mitigate and Adapt to Climate Change" (Boreal Songbird Initiative and Canadian Boreal Initiative, 2009), <https://www.borealbirds.org/sites/default/files/pubs/report-full.pdf>.

Canada's federal and provincial leaders to support Indigenous-proposed initiatives that would protect species and promote local economic development.⁸

Boreal caribou habitat protection would have extensive benefits for communities and species alike, and we look forward to learning about your implementation of these plans.

Sincerely,

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⁸ E.g., see: Fort Nelson First Nation, "Medzih Action Plan: Fort Nelson First Nation Boreal Caribou Recovery Plan," September 2017, http://www.fortnelsonfirstnation.org/uploads/1/4/6/8/14681966/2017-sept-29_fnfn_medzih_action_plan_final_medres.pdf.

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