



**APNQL**  
ASSEMBLÉE DES PREMIÈRES NATIONS  
QUÉBEC-LABRADOR

**AFNQL**  
ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS  
QUEBEC-LABRADOR

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**PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**REFORM OF THE FOREST REGIME: THE APPROACH AND  
PROPOSALS OF THE MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND  
FORESTS ARE UNACCEPTABLE**

***Wendake, December 10<sup>th</sup>*** - The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL) must once again denounce the irreverent attitude of the ministère des Ressources naturelles et des Forêts (MRNF) towards First Nations in its approach to “modernizing” Quebec's forestry regime.

The meeting between the MRNF and First Nations on November 29 was completely disconcerting and it is an affront to First Nations and their rights. The haste with which the MRNF presented its priorities and orientations—despite their importance and direct impact on First Nations rights and ways of life—is unacceptable. Further, the Ministry asked First Nations to comment on this information but offered no concrete answers to any of the questions put to it. These conditions certainly cannot represent rigorous, respectful collaboration in good faith. Since the beginning, all the conditions governing this process adopted by the ministry have prevented First Nations from expressing their concerns and issues in a free, prior and informed manner.

The MRNF's general approach to this reform seems based on satisfying the needs of the forest industry, while the content presented by the MRNF last Friday shows no real willingness to integrate the visions and aspirations of First Nations, fails to meet their needs and even goes against what they have consistently recommended in the past.

Several of the MRNF's proposals are cause for concern. For example, the MRNF's desire to return a large part of the responsibility for forest planning to the industry would represent a step backwards. Turning the responsibility of forestry management and planning over to the industry operators who stand to immediately benefit it is a blatant conflict of interest. Industry is not obliged to consider First Nations' rights and interests, unlike governments.

“ This lack of consideration and real integration of our issues and concerns in this process is regrettable. The MRNF cannot avoid respecting the rights of First Nations ”, deplores Ghislain Picard, AFNQL's Regional Chief.

The Quebec Superior Court recently handed down rulings that clearly highlight the Quebec government's flagrant lack of upstream consultation : one with the Essipit and Pekuakamiulnuatsh First Nations in the context of the development of a national strategy for the protection of woodland and mountain caribou (Court order requiring a separate, upstream consultation process), and another with the Barriere Lake First Nation (Mitchikanibikok Inik) in the context of claims allowing mineral exploration on its territory. It's time for the government to take note of these judgments and change its ways.

Faced with this situation, if the Minister does not make a major shift in the changes to be made to the forestry regime, First Nations will mobilize and put in place the necessary means to defend them and impose the respect they deserve.

#### **About AFNQL**

The Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador is the regional political organization that brings together the 43 Chiefs of the First Nations in Quebec and Labrador. <https://apnql.com/en/>

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#### **Informations**

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