



Kevin Edgson, President and CEO
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December 16, 2021

Dear Mr. Edgson:

We are writing to you regarding our serious concerns about the application by Eacom to extend Roads H and I over the Salamander River and into the southern portion of the Mishigamish in the Broadback River Valley. We see the company's decision to return to the plans in the original application as an act that disregards the compromise reached by COMEX and concerned parties in 2016 and growing concerns about species decline, climate change and other threats to the Cree Way of Life. This application, if approved, would undercut years of work by Waswanipi and the Cree Nation Government to secure conservation through permanent designation for this irreplaceable area of intact boreal forest and implicate Eacom in violations of globally recognized Indigenous rights.

NRDC and Canopy have supported the Waswanipi and the Cree Nation Government for many years in their efforts to protect the Mishigamish, and were involved in the original COMEX hearing on this proposal. We, along with Nature Canada, who has more recently added their support, consider Waswanipi's long-standing calls to protect it one of our top priorities. Since that time, our concerns with expanding roads into this globally vital area have only increased.

Canada's boreal forest is the most carbon-dense forest on the planet, storing more than twice as much carbon as the world's oil and gas reserves. The Mishigamish is also home to populations of threatened boreal caribou, whose numbers are in an alarming decline. Protecting the forest in Waswanipi territory has multiple benefits - protecting the Cree Way of Life, conserving caribou and other biodiversity, and sustaining a critical shield against climate change at a time when many regions of the world are experiencing extreme weather.

A September 2019 resolution by the community in Waswanipi called for "absolute protection." The spokesmen for the traplines that would be most affected by extending Roads H and I have voiced their opposition to this plan. Newly elected Grand Chief Mandy Gull has long been a leading spokesperson for the protection of the Mishigamish or Broadback beyond Quebec's borders and central to securing more protection in Eeyou Istchee. Earlier this year, at the first meeting between President Biden and Prime Minister Trudeau, Indigenous-led

protection for both climate action and biodiversity protection anchored their joint statement. And at the recent United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change conference (COP26), the international community recognized the critical role of Indigenous leadership in protecting forests through the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use and other agreements.

Thanks to the long leadership by Waswanipi and increased global attention to the role of Indigenous peoples in conservation, protection of the Broadback is one of the biggest opportunities in Canada today to advance Indigenous-led protected and conserved areas (IPCA). That is why we are so alarmed that Eacom and its consortium of logging companies would propose to build roads into the southern portion of the Mishigamish in contravention of Cree wishes. We are gravely concerned that approval of this application would violate a fundamental provision of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) requiring Free, Prior, and Informed Consent for development activities in Indigenous traditional territories.

Concern is also growing in the marketplace regarding companies that violate Indigenous rights and degrade critical forest ecosystems. Investors and policymakers are increasingly demanding climate-friendlier forest products that are sourced in alignment with internationally recognized Indigenous rights. Your proposal to extend Roads H and I into the Mishigamish counters your companies' public promises and jeopardizes the reputations of your company, those in the consortium, and of Quebec.

By advancing – rather than undercutting - Broadback protection, you and Quebec stand to mitigate concerns in the global marketplace and bolster international standing.

We call on you to withdraw the application and support efforts of the Cree Nation Government and Quebec to finally secure full protection of the Mishigamish as well as respect the opposition of the tallymen to further incursion of these roads into their traplines.

We would be pleased to meet with you to discuss our concerns.

Sincerely,



Casey Brennan
Senior Campaigner
Canopy



Anthony Swift
Director, Canada Project
Natural Resources Defense Council

CC:

Jean-Paul Carrier, President of Materiaux Blanchet
Remi G. Lalonde, President and CEO of Resolute Forest Products
Dave Lepage, Corporate Director of Forestry and Procurement of Chantiers Chibougamau Ltée

Marcel Happyjack, Chief of Cree First Nation of Waswanipi
Ronnie Ottereyes, Deputy Chief of Cree First Nation of Waswanipi
Alexander Moses, Councillor of Cree First Nation of Waswanipi
Flora Blacksmith, Councillor of Cree First Nation of Waswanipi
Michael Grant, Councillor of Cree First Nation of Waswanipi
Andy Metabie, Councillor of Cree First Nation of Waswanipi
Marlene Kitchen, Councillor of Cree First Nation of Waswanipi
Gloria Jolly, Councillor of Cree First Nation of Waswanipi
Don Saganash, Councillor of Cree First Nation of Waswanipi
Steven Blacksmith, Director of Natural Resources of Cree First Nation of Waswanipi
Henry George Gull, Manager of Forest Authority of Cree First Nation of Waswanipi
Marlene Kitchen, Councillor
Gloria Jolly, Councillor
Don Saganash, Councillor
Steven Blacksmith, Director of Natural Resources
Henry George Gull, Manager, Forest Authority