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Cher monsieur Couillard,

Dans une lettre envoyée en mai 2005, 1500 scientifiques de plus de 50 pays à travers le monde, dont 71 du Québec, ont demandé aux leaders des gouvernements canadiens de veiller à la protection d'au moins la moitié de la forêt boréale du Canada. Depuis cet appel, nous avons suivi la progression de ce dossier avec beaucoup d'intérêt.

Nous avons été ravis d'apprendre que le 9 mai 2011, après 60 réunions de groupes de travail sectoriels et de concertation, les représentants du gouvernement du Québec, des régions, des gouvernements des Premières Nations (Cris, Naskapis, Innus) et Inuit, et les secteurs socio-économiques, communautaires, et environnementaux ont signé une « Déclaration de partenaires » s'engageant dans une série de politiques de développement durable dans le nord du Québec qui comprenait l'engagement à consacrer 50 % du territoire à des fins non industrielles, à la protection de l'environnement, et à la sauvegarde de la biodiversité.<sup>1</sup>

Le 5 Février 2012, un délai a été fixé pour atteindre cet objectif d'ici 2035, avec un objectif intermédiaire de 20 % d'ici 2020, ainsi qu'une planification écologique qui devait être lancée en 2013.<sup>1</sup> Au cours de la récente campagne électorale, vous vous êtes engagé à relancer le Plan Nord dans toutes ses dimensions économiques, sociales et environnementales en reprenant où nous avons laissé.<sup>2</sup>

Cet engagement méritait, et a en effet reçu, le soutien des communautés scientifiques et environnementales internationales; en protégeant la moitié de l'environnement naturel du nord du Québec et en assurant un développement responsable dans le reste de la région, votre gouvernement mettra en mouvement un des projets de développement durable et de conservation de la nature les plus ambitieux en Amérique du Nord, projet qui pourrait servir de modèle au reste du monde.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mddep.gouv.qc.ca/infuseur/communique.asp?no=2036>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.plq.org/fr/article/un-gouvernement-liberal-relancera-le-developpement-durable-du-nord--avec-le-plan-nord-->

En 2012, lors de son Congrès mondial de la nature, l'Union internationale pour la conservation de la nature a affirmé que « l'objectif établi de préserver 50 % du territoire nordique du Québec de l'activité industriel - s'il se concrétise correctement - pourrait servir de modèle planétaire en cette heure grave où nous luttons contre les immenses défis que sont la perte de diversité et les changements climatiques » et a salué « la vision et l'engagement du Gouvernement du Québec à l'égard de la conservation de la nature et du respect des droits des peuples autochtones ».<sup>3</sup>

Les scientifiques ont déjà catalogué certaines des ressources naturelles qui constituent le patrimoine naturel du nord du Québec. En ce qui concerne la faune, le nord du Québec fournit un habitat à 340 millions d'oiseaux, ainsi que certaines des plus grandes populations de caribous migrants et poissons d'eau douce en Amérique du Nord. Cependant, les populations de certaines espèces sont très basses : le caribou des bois, le carcajou et l'aigle royal se trouvent tous sur la liste des espèces menacées ou vulnérables au Québec, tandis que les grands troupeaux de caribous migrants de jadis sont considérablement diminués. En termes d'écoservices de la région boréale au bénéfice de la société, y compris la filtration de l'eau et le stockage du carbone, leur valeur totale non marchande est estimée à 13,8 fois plus élevée que la valeur marchande nette de l'extraction du capital naturel.<sup>ii</sup>

En plus de la grande biodiversité de cette région, le changement climatique est une préoccupation majeure qui influence notre vision de la planification de la conservation du nord du Québec. Chaque jour, de nouveaux facteurs indiquent que la dégradation de l'environnement affecte fondamentalement notre patrimoine naturel, et la réduction des émissions industrielles de carbone est une priorité absolue. Bien qu'il soit tentant de s'appuyer sur des solutions technologiques prouvées coûteuses, une approche responsable et durable s'inscrit dans notre cadre actuel de connaissances. Les écosystèmes boréaux stockent efficacement plus de carbone dans leurs arbres, leur sol et leur tourbe que tout autre environnement. Il est de notre responsabilité d'être les gardiens de ces vastes réserves de carbone nordique.<sup>iii</sup>

Le domaine de la biologie de la conservation identifie quatre objectifs nécessaires dans l'atteinte de la viabilité à long terme d'un écosystème:<sup>iv,v</sup>

1. la représentation de tous les types d'écosystèmes naturels dans les aires protégées;
2. le maintien des populations de toutes les espèces indigènes conformément aux fluctuations naturelles en termes d'abondance et de répartition;
3. la préservation des processus écologiques; et
4. la préservation de la résilience aux changements environnementaux.

Dans le contexte du nord du Québec, il est également important que nos décisions de conservation et de développement soient fondées sur des données scientifiques solides.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://portals.iucn.org/docs/iucnpolicy/2012-resolutions/fr/WCC-2012-Res-064-FR%20Reconnaitre%20les%20progres%20du%20Quebec%20en%20matiere%20de%20conservation%20de%20la%20region%20boréale.pdf>

Il est de notre ferme espoir que le l'état naturel du nord du Québec puisse être maintenu pour les générations futures, et qu'un processus de planification assurera que les objectifs de conservation soient atteints, lors de la planification pour le développement futur, d'une manière qui soit compatible avec ces objectifs. Il sera également important d'agir rapidement pour identifier les zones qui répondent à ces critères et qui pourraient être vulnérables au développement industriel afin que les conflits potentiels puissent être adressés et résolus.

Nous, les scientifiques signataires, vous encourageons à maintenir votre engagement à protéger au moins 50 % de la région située au nord du 49e parallèle de toute activité industrielle d'ici 2035, veillant ainsi que le statut global du Québec comme chef de file en matière de conservation demeure un objectif qui représente les aspirations de la société québécoise dans son ensemble, plutôt que celui d'un parti en particulier. Nous, à notre tour, promettons de travailler avec vous et avec les organismes de recherche, les peuples autochtones, les communautés locales, les différentes parties prenantes sectorielles, les groupes de conservation ainsi que les entreprises de la région boréale du Québec pour réaliser cette vision.

Nous vous exhortons, monsieur Couillard, à rapidement mettre en place ce processus de planification. Nous demandons que cela soit fait d'une manière qui engage pleinement les communautés dans ces régions, en particulier les peuples autochtones, dont les connaissances, les relations et, surtout, les droits doivent être respectés.

Nous sommes convaincus qu'en agissant de la sorte, le Québec va s'imposer comme un chef de file mondial dans le développement durable, la conservation de la biodiversité et la lutte contre les changements climatiques, tout en faisant croître son économie et créant un nouveau modèle de gestion des écosystèmes pour le 21e siècle, qui constituera la norme pour les pays du monde entier.

- i. Berteaux, D. 2013. Quebec's large-scale Plan Nord. *Conservation Biology* 27:242-243.
- ii. M. Anielski and S. Wilson, 2009. *Counting Canada's Natural Capital: Assessing the Real Value of Canada's Boreal Ecosystems*. Canadian Boreal Initiative and The Pembina Institute, p. 61.
- iii. Cette responsabilité a été exprimée par l'Union internationale de conservation de la nature (IUCN), qui a recommandé que le Canada et la Russie assurent la protection de leurs régions boréales.
- iv. International Boreal Conservation Science Panel. 2013. *Préservation de la dernière grande forêt de la Terre : mode d'emploi*. <http://borealscience.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/conserving-last-great-forests-fr1.pdf>
- v. Noss, R.F., A.P. Dobson, R. Baldwin, P. Beier, C.R. Davis, D.A. Dellasala, J. Francis, H. Locke, K. Nowak, R. Lopez, C. Reining, S.C. Trombulak, and G. Tabor. 2012. Bolder thinking for conservation. *Conservation Biology* 26:1-4.

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