

For Immediate Release

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MEDIA RELEASE

Chorus of celebrities and conservation groups call for protection of Ontario's Boreal Forest

Capture green markets, respond to global warming, save caribou

TORONTO – Prominent Canadian authors, artists and musicians joined seven conservation groups today in calling on Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty to bolster his government's much-anticipated climate change plan with protection of Ontario's Boreal Forest. A letter urging the Premier to fulfill his pre-election promise was sent by eleven prominent Canadians including Robert Bateman, Sarah Harmer, Cathy Jones, Yann Martel, and Clayton Ruby. They join conservation groups in championing an innovative plan to set aside vast swaths of intact Boreal Forest in the face of global warming while safeguarding threatened species and revitalizing Ontario's flagging forest sector. It would also elevate Ontario as a distinguished environmental leader within North America.

"Forests have long been valued by Canadians as an important part of our heritage," said award-winning author and letter signatory, Barbara Gowdy. "Here's a chance for the Premier to share being a hero with our forests in fighting against climate change and providing critical habitat for caribou."

Government action to protect these intact forests would help Ontario capture a rapidly expanding market for eco-friendly products such as those certified by Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). It is estimated that the global market for ecologically harvested wood products is currently more than \$5 billion - with hundreds of North American companies committing to shift to ecologically responsible forest products in recent years.

"Increasingly informed corporate consumers are reducing their carbon and biodiversity impacts by shifting to papers that are free of endangered and intact forests," said Nicole Rycroft, Executive Director of Markets Initiative. "Ontario stands to gain from North America's increasingly green market place but to do so; it requires significant leadership from the government and industry on Ontario's intact forest."

Logging activities in Canada's Boreal Forest are a significant contributor of greenhouse gas emissions each year – releasing twice as much as all passenger vehicles in the country. It is also estimated that intact natural forests, when left undisturbed, store up to fifty percent more carbon than forests that are managed for logging. Protecting the carbon stored in the Boreal Forest provides a complementary strategy to a renewed effort to meet the targets set out in the Kyoto Protocol and beyond.

"The McGuinty government has an extraordinary opportunity for a huge ecological, political and economic victory," says Janet Sumner, Executive Director of CPAWS Wildlands League, "but only if they position Ontario as a global leader in ecologically-friendly forest products. This is essential in efforts to respond to global warming and save the majestic woodland caribou from extinction."

Before being elected, Premier Dalton McGuinty promised to implement a land-use planning regime for the northern third of the province, an area that until now has been off limits to logging.



So far he has failed to deliver on this promise in spite of the fact that conservation based land use planning is seen as an essential first step for sustainable economic development in the North. Additionally, environmental organizations have identified intact areas of Ontario's allocated Boreal forest that should immediately be deferred from logging. These deferrals would not cause mill closure or job losses as recent mill closures have freed up millions of cubic meters of standing timber.

For more information, please visit www.savetheboreal.ca or contact:

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