



For Immediate Release

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## **Industry and Environmental groups applaud release of Far North report** *Report shows strong support for funding and First Nations lead on planning*

**Toronto** –Today Ontario Waterpower Association and CPAWS Wildlands League applauded the release of the consensus advice of the Far North Advisory Council by MNR Minister Donna Cansfield. The groups were members of the Far North Advisory Council--- a public committee struck by Minister Cansfield to provide advice and input on how to protect at least half of the Far North in a network of conservation lands while balancing social, economic and environmental priorities.

The multi-stakeholder Council met intensively over a 6 month period from September '08 to February '09 and achieved a surprising amount of consensus and good will. For example, all agreed that:

- Resources required for the Far North Initiative should be regarded as a cost-effective return on investment, resulting in an overwhelming net benefit for local communities, the province and country as a whole;
- Decision-making authority in the Far North is held by First Nations and the Province and that all planning and development activities require community agreement before proceeding; and
- A comprehensive planning framework is required that includes all relevant sectors and reflects the unique culture, geography and global significance of this part of the province.

The entirety of the advice can be found at <http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/274245.pdf>.

"We all rolled up our sleeves and put forward our best ideas on how economic prosperity and ecological protection could be achieved in the Far North in partnership with First Nations," said Paul Norris, President of the Ontario Waterpower Association. "Groups set aside their traditional positions and focused on creating something new and dynamic worthy of this incredible initiative," Norris added.

"We were honoured to work together to achieve a precedent-setting model for the world," said Janet Sumner, Executive Director of CPAWS Wildlands League. "The report demonstrates that good outcomes are possible from groups that don't always see eye to eye," Sumner said.

While the Council's original term is done, several of the groups would like to continue to support the aspirations of Aboriginal communities and provide certainty for all.

Yesterday the government also announced funding to enable a six-year plan to clean up 16 sites that have become contaminated with toxic materials in the northern Boreal region. The clean-up has support in the Far North Advisory Council's advice and is important to overall efforts to conserve the unique Boreal ecology of this part of Ontario. "We congratulate Minister Cansfield, Grand Chief Stan Louttit of the Mushkegowuk Tribal Council and all the First Nations that have fought for decades to clean up the contaminated Mid-Canada Radar Sites in northern Ontario," the groups said.

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