

Comments concerning the Bill to amend the Forest Act (Bill 49)

The comments of the James Bay Advisory Committee on the Environment (JBACE) are not extensive in that they do not concern all of the proposed amendments included in Bill 49 but only those provisions of particular interest to the JBACE. In general, we would underscore the importance, for any modifications of the forestry regime, that said modifications consider the provisions of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA) and the Agreement Concerning a New Relationship Between the Government of Québec and the Crees (ANRQC), which agreement includes an adapted forestry regime.

1. Closing and restoration of disused forest roads

⇒ c.f. Sections 1, 3, 11, 12, 38 and 42 of Bill 49

It is proposed that the Minister be given the authority with respect to the closing of forest roads and their renewed use. We support this measure. Indeed, this problem of disused forest roads is one that has preoccupied the JBACE since the 1980s, given the resulting increased access to faunal resources and potential conflicts with Cree trappers. We therefore recommend that the organizations established under the JBNQA, namely the JBACE, and the ANRQC be invited to contribute to the selection process of the roads to be closed.

Also, it makes sense for this ultimate forestry use to be taken into account in forest management plans and annual intervention plans. In relation to this issue, we would conclude by proposing that aboriginal communities and companies be allowed, as are municipalities, to manage the work involved in closing forest roads.

2. Control and monitoring activities

⇒ c.f. Sections 16, 17, 18 and 19 of Bill 49

In the sections respecting control and monitoring activities, we understand that the proposed amendments aim at assuring a greater efficiency both for the Department and contract awardees. However, these modifications could impact the implementation of the adapted forestry regime within the ANRQC, whose monitoring is the responsibility of the Cree-Québec Forestry Board. Should this be the case, it will prove important for any implementation measures to be determined in collaboration with the Board, so as to make sure that they comply with the adapted forestry regime.

3. Changes in the destination of harvested timber and provisional increases in authorized harvests

⇒ c.f. Sections 8, 9, 23, 24, 36 and 37 of Bill 49

The JBACE is of the opinion that the proposed amendments concerning changes in the destination of harvested timber and any increases in authorized harvests under favourable economic conditions could impact strongly on the in-forest activities of the Crees. Obviously, the consultation and participation process within the ANRQC will have to apply should consideration be given to implementing such measures.

4. Delimitation of forest management units

⇒ c.f. Section 5 of Bill 49

With respect to the delimitation of forest management units, we would like to underscore that this process has required the application of important resources by all parties involved in the implementation of the adapted forestry regime under the ANRQC. This is why we believe that any modification of the limits of the regime's forest management units in the territory should be the subject of a consultation with the Cree-Québec Forestry Board.