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July 13, 2009

Honourable Stan Struthers
Minister of Conservation
Room 330 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0V8

Dear Minister Struthers;

Re: Comments – Renewal of Poplar/Nanowin Rivers Park Reserve

We are providing these comments on Manitoba Conservation's stated intention to renew the Poplar/Nanowin Rivers Provincial Park Reserve to allow more time for decisions to be made on its final designation. It is unfortunate that Manitoba Conservation's posting further confuses the Land Use Classification changes made in December 2007.

Manitoba Wildlands supports renewal of interim protection through a third 5-year regulation under the Provincial Parks Act. We also wholeheartedly support the initiative to establish a World Heritage Site (which will encompass the Poplar/Nanowin Rivers Park Reserve) that is comprised largely of interconnected protected areas, with further zoning according to community land use preferences.

To be clear, we support protection that meets both the Manitoba Government's Protected Areas Initiative standard of prohibiting "through legal means, logging, mining (including aggregate extraction), and oil, petroleum, natural gas or hydro-electric development" and/or the highest IUCN protection standards (Categories Ia, Ib, II).

We are, however, concerned that the Manitoba Government has not yet acted on Poplar River First Nation's lands management plan, which was provided to government in fall 2005. Election promises committing to permanent protection made by your government in the spring 2007 election have yet to be fulfilled.

We also have concerns about Bill 6, whose purpose is in part to address east side First Nations' desire for protection of community-nominated traditional territory areas. This legislation is not proclaimed and will not have regulations for lands protection in place in a timeframe useful for Poplar River First Nation.

In summary, Poplar River First Nation's park reserve and lands management plan are important elements of the World Heritage Site and this community's efforts to date represent leadership, dedication and innovation that warrant support through real and timely action by this government.

Designation and permanent protection of the Poplar/Nanowin Rivers Park Reserve can be acted upon in the coming months. We look forward to celebrating the regulation that confers a permanent protection designation.

Yours truly,

Gaile Whelan Enns
Director, Manitoba Wildlands

cc.
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