

Ecological services provided by natural environments

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that natural environments are known to provide ecological services, but that the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs does not have the tools required to perform an exhaustive assessment of those services.*
- ◆ **Opinion** – *The inquiry commission is of the opinion that it would be appropriate for the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs, in its information documentation, to give more details about the ecological services provided by natural environments, in order to support the process of implementing the network of protected areas in Québec.*

Representativeness of the reserves

The Abitibi Lowlands natural province

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that, in the Abitibi Lowlands natural province, the proposed Lac Parent Marshlands and Dunes-de-la-Rivière-Attic biodiversity reserves play a significant role in representing the physical environments of the physiographic units in which they are located, although the percentage of the area protected is below the Government's target of 12% for 2015.*

The Mistassini Uplands natural province

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the proposed Lac Parent, Lac Wetetnagami and Lac Saint-Cyr biodiversity reserves, located in the Mistassini Uplands natural province, play a notable role in representing the physical environments of the physiographic units in which they are located. Although overall coverage in this natural province exceeds the Government's target of 12% for 2015, this is not the case for Abitibi-Témiscamingue, because the percentage of protected areas in the Lac Mégiscane hills natural region is less than half the target.*

Southern Laurentian natural province

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the proposed Rivière Dumoine aquatic reserve, and the proposed Basses-Collines-du-Ruisseau-Serpent, Vallée-de-la-Rivière-Maganasipi and Wanaki biodiversity reserves, in the Southern Laurentian natural province, play a significant role in representing the physical environments of the physiographic units in which they are located. The 12% protection target has been exceeded in three of the four areas, although it has not been achieved in the natural province or natural region as a whole.*
- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that, for the portion of the ecological reference framework's three natural provinces situated in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, the eight proposed reserves under*

consideration play a significant role in representing the physical environments of the physiographic units in which they are located, and also play a role in consolidating the region's network of protected areas. However, they do not provide sufficient coverage in the natural regions to achieve the target of protecting 12% of Québec's total area.

Effectiveness of the reserves

Extensions

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the extensions will markedly increase the core conservation areas, tripling the area of the proposed Wanaki biodiversity reserve and doubling the areas of the proposed Lac Parent Marshlands, Basses-Collines-du-Ruisseau-Serpent and Vallée-de-la-Rivière-Maganasipi biodiversity reserves.*
- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that, due to their size and configuration, the proposed Lac Saint-Cyr and Wanaki biodiversity reserves are unlikely to maintain the cohesion of the ecosystems they are supposed to protect. The extensions proposed by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs would address this issue in part, by providing a larger conservation core than is the case for the original reserve areas.*
- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the extensions would provide the Wetetnagami and Dunes-de-la-rivière-Attic biodiversity reserves with a modest conservation core that is absent from the initial proposal due to the longilineal shape of the former and the small size of the latter.*
- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the size of the proposed Lac Parent Marshlands, Lac Wetetnagami, Lac Saint-Cyr and Dunes-de-la-Rivière-Attic biodiversity reserves, located in the north of the region, may not be sufficient to ensure the continuity of forest succession stages following large-scale fires, even with the extensions proposed by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs.*

Connectivity

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the proposed reserves currently under consideration are located in an area that has undergone significant disturbance from human activity, and that the territories of some of the reserves themselves have also undergone similar disturbances.*

Ecosystem-based forest development and forest certification

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that six of the eight proposed reserves under consideration are shown as high conservation value forests or large essential habitats on the tactical regional integrated forest development plans submitted for public consultation by the Ministère des Ressources naturelles in early 2013, and are also situated within larger areas set aside for conservation.*
- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that ecosystem-based forest development, as contemplated in the new forest regime that came into force in April 2013, could help to produce substantial improvements in the protected area network's effectiveness in achieving the conservation goals set out in Québec's Strategy on Protected Areas, in particular with regard to connectivity and the protection of old-growth forests. The different management elements of the new regime had not been finalized when this report was written, and the utility of the new planning system, along with its contribution to the Government's Strategy on Protected Areas, will become clear over time.*

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the Government's Biodiversity Protection Strategy and the ensuing network of protected areas are integral elements of the public land management process, and in particular of ecosystem-based forest development, which is still a work in progress. However, the conditions required for their integration and for collaboration between the area's forest development stakeholders have not yet been achieved, among other things due to the iterative nature of the task of implementing both the network of protected areas and the new forest development regime.*
- ◆ **Opinion** – *The inquiry commission is of the opinion that, due to the stringent requirements of the 2011-2020 strategic plan associated with the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the undertakings of the Gouvernement du Québec in this respect, the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs and the Ministère des Ressources naturelles should work together to optimize the introduction of ecosystem-based forest development and the creation of new, more versatile categories of protected areas, so that the objectives of the Government's Biodiversity Protection Strategy can be achieved within the proposed timeframe.*

Chapter 5 **Issues: Human Environment**

Land use

The public land use plan

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the 2012 Abitibi-Témiscaminque and Outaouais public land use plans mention the Government's policy of preserving the biodiversity of natural environments in the proposed biodiversity reserves and aquatic reserve, and grant "strict protection" status to those reserves.*

The land use and development plan

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the RCMs concerned have not prescribed every prohibited use for the eight proposed reserves in their land use and development plans.*
- ◆ **Opinion** – *In view of the prohibited uses and restrictions on activities in the proposed reserves, as well as the timeframe for the granting of permanent status, the inquiry commission is of the opinion that it is essential for the RCMs, as soon as provisional protection status has been granted, to include the plan and appropriate prohibited uses in their land use and development plans, so that they can take them into account when exercising their powers, as stipulated in section 30 of the Natural Heritage Conservation Act.*

The socioeconomic aspects

The regional economy and its diversification

- ◆ **Opinion** – *The inquiry commission is of the opinion that a study of the socioeconomic repercussions of implementing biodiversity or aquatic reserves should be produced by the Ministère des Ressources naturelles and the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs, so that the communities concerned can adopt a position based on documented data. Under the principle of access to information, the study should be made available for public consultation.*

Forest operations: current status

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the eight proposed reserves have reduced the allowable cut in Abitibi-Témiscamingue and in Outaouais by 247,613 m³/year, and that the extensions proposed by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs would lead to a further reduction of 79,156 m³/year. However, in the period from 2002 to 2011, the entire allowable cut was not allocated and harvesting was hindered by poor market conditions. As a result, the allowable cut was almost never harvested in its entirety in the forest management units affected by the eight reserves.*

Sustainable forest development tools

- ◆ **Opinion** – *The inquiry commission is of the opinion that the reduction in the allowable cut caused by the eight proposed reserves in Abitibi-Témiscamingue and in Outaouais should be viewed from the standpoint of the new sustainable forest management strategy, which includes greater consideration for the preservation of biodiversity through the designation of protected areas, large essential habitats and high conservation value forests. In addition, the repercussions for the forest industry could eventually be minimized by re-offering volumes that were not harvested and by creating areas of increased timber production and category V and VI protected areas.*

The mining sector

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that, in Québec, active mining rights currently constitute an inalienable constraint for the creation of protected areas, and that such rights are very common in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region.*

Hydro-electric potential

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the proposed Rivière Mégiscane diversion is not supported by the regional community, although this was one of the original conditions for its implementation in 1997. In addition, the proposed diversion places restrictions on the delimitation of the proposed Lac Parent Marshlands, Dunes-de-la-Rivière-Attic and Lac Saint-Cyr biodiversity reserves.*
- ◆ **Opinion** – *The inquiry commission is of the opinion that the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs should work with its Government*

partners, as quickly as possible, to remove the inaccuracy from the altimetric data which, at the present time, is causing Lac Mesplet, Lac Cherrier and Lac Saint-Cyr to be excluded from the proposed Lac Saint-Cyr biodiversity reserve, and then begin to examine the possibility of extending the reserve in the future, with a view to improving its configuration.

- ◆ The inquiry commission observes that, if the proposed Rivière Mégiscane diversion goes ahead, it will not be possible to include a portion of Lac Parent in the proposed Lac Parent Marshlands biodiversity reserve, because this would be contrary to section 34 of the Natural Heritage Conservation Act.
- ◆ **Opinion** – The inquiry commission is of the opinion that, in the case of the proposed Dunes-de-la-Rivière-Attic biodiversity reserve, the reserve's boundaries should not only take into account the constraint relating to the Rivière Mégiscane high water mark, but should also exclude the portion of Rivière Attic that is influenced by it at their confluence, which could not be included in the reserve.

Access roads

- ◆ The inquiry commission observes that a process of reflection concerning access roads in the area, among other things to identify stretches of access road that must be maintained in priority and nominate the organizations that should be responsible for maintenance, has been launched by regional stakeholders in Abitibi-Témiscamingue and Outaouais.
- ◆ The inquiry commission observes that, in light of the information gathered for a biodiversity or aquatic reserve, provisions may be added to the reserve's conservation plan in order to minimize the impacts of road networks and motor vehicles on biodiversity.
- ◆ The inquiry commission observes that the decision to close or maintain forest roads in a biodiversity or aquatic reserve must be supported by an assessment of the work required to comply with the reserve's biodiversity preservation objective. In view of the procedure currently used to grant permanent status, the protected area management committee may in fact carry out the needs assessment several years after protection is granted through the allocation of proposed status, and this may have consequences for the integrity of the environment.
- ◆ **Opinion** – The inquiry commission is of the opinion that, where there is no management committee, any rationalization of the forest road network in a biodiversity or aquatic reserve, or the introduction of any measures designed to limit or prohibit access by certain vehicles, initiated by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs, must be preceded by a consultation of users.

Conservation management

The protection status allocation process

- ◆ The inquiry commission observes that the process used to select areas for protection does not require a plan of action and a conservation-oriented management process to be introduced before permanent protected status is granted. It can take up to ten years to obtain permanent status, and regional stakeholders have asked for this timeframe to be reduced.

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that, to do more than simply consolidate the existing network of protected areas in Abitibi-Témiscamingue and achieve the objective of protecting 12% of the territory by 2015, set by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs, an additional 2,780 km² must be protected.*
- ◆ **Opinion** – *The inquiry commission is of the opinion that the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs could enhance the seven proposed biodiversity reserves and the proposed aquatic reserve and give priority to the protection of peripheral areas in order to achieve the goal of protecting 12% of the territory by 2015, provided this would allow it to overcome the deficiencies of its network. In doing so, it would be acting in conformity with the main aspects of ecosystem-based forest development, and in compliance with its own strategic orientations.*

Management, development and resources

Management and development

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement de la Faune et des Parcs is interested in regionalizing the management of the seven biodiversity reserves and the aquatic reserve.*
- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the details relating to the management of each of the seven biodiversity reserves and the aquatic reserve have not yet been established by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs, and that these details will not be decided upon until permanent status has been granted.*
- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that some of the biodiversity reserves and the aquatic reserve currently under consideration could in fact be developed if their development is considered compatible with the conservation objectives of the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs.*

Knowledge acquisition

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs does not currently have an exhaustive profile of the seven biodiversity reserves and the aquatic reserve currently under consideration.*
- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs is currently focusing its efforts to constitute the network of protected areas and achieve the targets it has set for the years to come, and that it does not intend, for the time being, to allocate resources for the development of new knowledge.*

Resources

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the real need for new knowledge in connection with each of the proposed reserves will not be known until permanent status has been granted and the plan of action has been prepared, stipulating conservation requirements and the need for ecosystem protection, supervision and monitoring measures in those areas.*
- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that it is difficult to assess whether or not new knowledge is needed to achieve the conservation objectives of the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs for the eight areas under consideration, when the*

protection, supervision and monitoring measures required for conservation purposes will not be established for several years, and when their development, desired by some communities or stakeholders, may in fact depend upon the acquisition of additional information.

- ◆ **Opinion** – *In view of the Government's orientations concerning consolidation of the network of protected areas, the inquiry commission is of the opinion that the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs should work with its Government partners on a plan that would allow it to satisfy the technical and financial requirements needed to achieve its conservation objectives by establishing management, supervision, monitoring and knowledge acquisition measures, including measures for the acquisition of knowledge relating to development, where applicable.*
- ◆ **Opinion** – *Given that a plan of action would not be implemented, knowledge acquisition needs would not be assessed and a full characterization of the original state of the environment and of the development potential of the seven biodiversity reserves and one aquatic reserve would not be carried out until permanent status has been granted, the inquiry commission is of the opinion that such status, where justified, should be granted as soon as possible. At the same time, the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs should also grant permanent protection status to the proposed extensions, where it feels this would be justified, in order to prohibit natural resource harvesting in the extension areas.*

Chapter 6 **Aspects Specific to Each Reserve**

The Lac Parent Marshlands Biodiversity Reserve

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the eventual implementation of the Rivière Mégiscane diversion would require a structure to regulate water levels in Lac Parent. Under the Natural Heritage Conservation Act, this would mean that no portion of Lac Parent could be included in the reserve, thereby preventing the reserve from achieving its main goal of protecting the marshlands and their related biodiversity.*
- ◆ **Opinion** – *The inquiry commission is of the opinion that permanent status should be granted to the proposed Lac Parent Marshlands Biodiversity reserve in the short term, in order to help achieve the Government's biodiversity protection objectives.*
- ◆ **Opinion** – *The inquiry commission is of the opinion that the potential extensions presented by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs should form part of the Lac Parent Marshlands Biodiversity Reserve as soon as permanent status is granted, in order to reinforce the protection given to the Lac Parent Marshlands. The extensions proposed by participants to provide more protection for the marshlands' drainage area or for old-growth forests should be considered in more detail by the Ministère, to decide whether or not they should be included, in whole or in part, in the reserve.*
- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the Ministère des Ressources naturelles has stated that the data from the geophysical survey published in 2010 do not change its assessment of*

mineral potential, which is high in the southern portion of extension 2. Given the mining potential, these new data do not justify any delay in the granting of permanent status, either to the proposed reserve or to extensions 1 and 3 and the northern portion of extension 2.

- ◆ **Opinion** – *The inquiry commission is of the opinion that the users of the Lac Parent Marshlands biodiversity reserve should be made aware of how motor vehicles may disturb the natural environment, especially in sectors frequented by waterfowl. When reviewing the conservation plan, the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs should pay special attention to the introduction of zoning to this effect, in certain sectors of the reserve. If such zoning were to be considered appropriate, strict supervision at particular periods of the year would appear to be necessary to enforce it.*

- ◆ **Opinion** – *The inquiry commission is of the opinion that permanent status should be granted in the short term to the proposed Lac Wetetnagami Biodiversity Reserve, in order to help achieve the Government's biodiversity protection objectives.*

- ◆ **Opinion** – *The inquiry commission is of the opinion that the potential extensions presented by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs should be included in the Lac Wetetnagami Biodiversity Reserve as soon as permanent status is granted, in order to provide better protection for Lac Wetetnagami and Rivière Wetetnagami, create a conservation core and preserve the last of the forest masses around that core. In addition, the extensions proposed by participants to the south-west of the proposed reserve should be considered in more detail by the Ministère, to decide whether or not they should be included, in whole or in part, in the reserve.*

The Lac Saint-Cyr Biodiversity Reserve

- ◆ **Opinion** – Given that the constraint imposed by the partial diversion of Rivière Mégiscane for hydro-electricity production purposes, which prevents Lac Cherrier, Lac Saint-Cyr and Lac Mesplet from being included in the proposed Lac Saint-Cyr Biodiversity Reserve, could in fact be removed after analysis, and in view of the fact that the diversion may never take place, the inquiry commission is of the opinion that permanent status should be granted to this reserve and to all the extensions proposed by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs.

The Dunes-de-la-Rivière-Attic Biodiversity Reserve

- ◆ **Opinion** – The inquiry commission is of the opinion that permanent status should be granted in the short term to the Dunes-de-la-Rivière-Attic Biodiversity reserve, in order to help achieve the Government's biodiversity protection objectives.
- ◆ **Opinion** – The inquiry commission is of the opinion that the potential extensions presented by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs should form part of the Dunes-de-la-Rivière-Attic Biodiversity Reserve as soon as permanent status is granted, given the Reserve's limited size and the lack of a conservation core.

The Wanaki Biodiversity Reserve

- ◆ **Opinion** – The inquiry commission is of the opinion that permanent status should be granted in the short term to the proposed Wanaki Biodiversity Reserve, in order to help achieve the Government's biodiversity protection objectives. However, such status should only be granted after a definitive location has been chosen for the village, if this is done as planned before the fall of 2013, to avoid the possibility of having to alter the reserve's boundaries at a later date.
- ◆ **Opinion** – The inquiry commission is of the opinion that the potential extensions presented by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs should form part of the Wanaki Biodiversity Reserve as soon as permanent status is granted, mainly to ensure better network representation and increase the size of the conservation core. In addition, the extensions proposed by participants to link the Wanaki Biodiversity Reserve to the Rivière-Dumoine Aquatic Reserve offer certain ecological and cultural characteristics that would provide justification for the Ministère to examine the possibility of including all or some of them in the reserve.

Basses-Collines-du-Ruisseau-Serpent Biodiversity Reserve

- ◆ **Opinion** – *The inquiry commission is of the opinion that permanent status should be granted in the short term to the Basses-Collines-du-Ruisseau-Serpent Biodiversity Reserve, in order to help achieve the Government's biodiversity protection objectives.*
- ◆ **Opinion** – *In view of the gains in terms of protecting the Ruisseau Serpent, and in terms of representation, connectivity, conservation core and old-growth forest protection, the inquiry commission is of the opinion that the potential extensions presented by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs should be included in the Basses-Collines-du-Ruisseau-Serpent Biodiversity Reserve as soon as permanent status is granted.*

The Vallée-de-la-Rivière-Maganasipi Biodiversity Reserve

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs has undertaken to involve stakeholders concerned by the management and development of the Vallée-de-la-Rivière-Maganasipi Biodiversity Reserve, including the Aboriginal communities.*
- ◆ **Opinion** – *The inquiry commission is of the opinion that permanent status should be granted in the short term to the Vallée-de-la-Rivière-Maganasipi Biodiversity Reserve, in order to help achieve the Government's biodiversity protection objectives.*
- ◆ **Opinion** – *In view of the gains in terms of protecting the Rivière Maganasipi, and in terms of representation, connectivity, conservation core and old-growth forest protection, the inquiry commission is of the opinion that potential extensions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 presented by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs should be included in the Vallée-de-la-Rivière-Maganasipi Biodiversity Reserve as soon as permanent status is granted.*

The Rivière Dumoine Aquatic Reserve

Reconfiguration of the reserve

- ◆ **Opinion** – *The inquiry commission is of the opinion that permanent status should be granted in the short term to the Rivière Dumoine Aquatic Reserve, in order to help achieve the Government's biodiversity protection objectives.*
- ◆ **Opinion** – *In view of the gains in terms of protecting the Rivière Dumoine drainage basin, the inquiry commission is of the opinion that the potential extensions proposed by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs should be included in the Rivière Dumoine Aquatic Reserve as soon as permanent status is granted.*
- ◆ **Opinion** – *The inquiry commission is of the opinion that the extensions to the Rivière Dumoine Aquatic Reserve proposed by participants deserve to be considered in more detail by the*

Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs, before permanent status is granted, in order to assess the relevance of including all or some of them in the reserve.

Recreo-tourism and development

- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that, to different degrees, the Public Land Use Plan and the Land Use and Development Plan for the administrative regions of Abitibi-Témiscamingue and Outaouais both acknowledge the recreo-tourism opportunities offered by Rivière Dumoine.*
- ◆ *The inquiry commission observes that the mandate of the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs is to constitute biodiversity and aquatic reserves for conservation purposes, but not to develop them. Indeed, even though strong support was expressed during the public hearings for the development of the Rivière Dumoine aquatic reserve, the resources required to do this do not appear to be available.*
- ◆ **Opinion** – *The inquiry commission is of the opinion that an assessment of Rivière Dumoine user numbers and the river's ability to support those numbers is required quickly, to decide whether the level of use is likely to damage the environment and compromise the achievement of the proposed reserve's conservation objectives. The assessment should also be used to decide whether activities on the river should be structured more stringently.*

The proposed provincial park

- ◆ **Opinion** – *Since the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs is responsible for planning, creating and developing Québec's network of provincial parks, and since it has the necessary expertise to do this, the inquiry commission is of the opinion that it is up to the Ministère to decide whether or not it is appropriate to create a provincial park in all or part of the proposed Rivière Dumoine aquatic reserve. If this avenue is not chosen, it would be interesting for the Ministère to present other development possibilities for the reserve, given that it is undeniably attractive to enthusiasts of water sports, such as canoeing and kayaking.*

Conclusion

This inquiry and public hearing mandate concerned the proposed Lac Parent Marshlands, Lac Wetetnagami, Lac Saint-Cyr, Dunes-de-la-Rivière-Attic, Wanaki, Basses-Collines-du-Ruisseau-Serpent and Vallée-de-la-Rivière-Maganasipi biodiversity reserves and the proposed Rivière Dumoine aquatic reserve, along with their extensions.

Following the public consultations and the commission's analysis, it appears that these protected areas make a significant contribution to representing the physical environments of the physiographic units in which they are located, but are insufficient to obtain satisfactory regional coverage for the target of protecting biodiversity in 12% of Québec's total territory by 2015.

If the Government were to grant permanent protection status to the eight proposed reserves, it would help to achieve its biodiversity protection objectives by consolidating the network in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region.

The proposed reserves must be as coherent and as ecologically relevant as possible, to ensure that the ecological integrity of the protected ecosystems is maintained. Although some people objected to the simultaneous approval of the extensions and of the areas currently covered by provisional protection status, others noted the small size of some of the reserves, and expressed a desire to build around the areas currently set aside for reserves. In such conditions, just two years prior to the Government's deadline for achieving its target, and given the timeframe involved, the extensions should not be postponed. On the contrary, with a handful of exceptions the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs should include the extensions it has proposed in the reserves.

In addition, the Ministère should consider some of the extensions proposed by participants and retained by the commission, in order to decide on the relevance of including all or some of them in the reserves.

Similarly, the Ministère should consider, first, the possibility of including the proposed extensions in the Lac Parent Marshland biodiversity reserve, so that the marshlands themselves are protected, since this is the primary objective of the reserve, and second, the possibility of including the three lakes and the surrounding land in the Lac Saint-Cyr biodiversity reserve, to improve its configuration and the protection it provides.

The extensions presented by the Ministère should be included in the Wanaki biodiversity reserve as soon as permanent status is granted, mainly to ensure better network representation and to increase the size of the conservation core. In addition, the extensions proposed by participants in order to connect the Wanaki biodiversity reserve to the Rivière Dumoine aquatic reserve exhibit a number of ecological and cultural characteristics that would provide justification for the Ministère to consider the possibility of including all or some of them in the reserve.

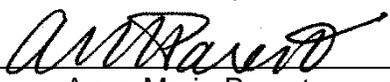
In view of the gains they provide in terms of protecting the Rivière Dumoine drainage basin, the potential extensions presented by the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs should be included in the Rivière Dumoine aquatic reserve as soon as permanent status is granted. In addition, the extensions proposed by participants deserve to be considered in more detail, to decide whether or not it would be relevant to include some or all of them in the reserve.

An assessment of user numbers on the Rivière Dumoine, and the river's ability to support those numbers, is required quickly in order to decide whether usage levels are likely to damage the environment and compromise the proposed reserve's ability to achieve its conservation objectives. The assessment should also be used to decide whether activities on the river should be structured more stringently. Since the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs is responsible for developing Québec's network of provincial parks and has the expertise required to do this, it should consider the request made by some participants to establish a provincial park in the Rivière Dumoine aquatic reserve.

As far as the socioeconomic repercussions are concerned, the Ministère des Ressources naturelles and the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs should produce an implementation study for the biodiversity reserves and aquatic reserve, and the study should be made available for public consultation.

The conservation plan that would be implemented after permanent protection status has been granted requires the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement, de la Faune et des Parcs to produce a plan of action setting out the management measures it intends to apply in order to achieve its conservation objectives. Moreover, the Ministère intends to include regional partners in the process of managing the reserves, some of which may also be developed. Given the fact that the deadline is fast approaching, the Ministère should prepare its plan quickly, so that it will be able to respond in a timely manner to the financial and technical requirements.

Made in Québec City,



Anne-Marie Parent
President, Inquiry Commission



John Haemmerli
Commissioner