



For immediate release—September 17, 2008

Tolko abusing public forests; government failing Manitobans

Private logging corporation Tolko rather than government running logging stakeholder meeting, Manitoba's parks and woodland caribou suffering

Tolko Industries is hosting a stakeholder meeting today to discuss logging development in provincial parks and in woodland caribou habitat. The elected government of Manitoba rather than a private corporation should be running this meeting, with a mandate to act in accordance with the best wishes of stakeholders and the citizens of Manitoba. In most jurisdictions in Canada, a logging corporation would not be allowed to run a stakeholder meeting on how to manage a provincial park or public forests.

In the fall of 2006, the Manitoba government approved Tolko's logging expansion into woodland caribou habitat, even though studies definitively show caribou don't tolerate logging near their habitat. Since then, the government has failed to provide any plan as to how the caribou will survive. In addition, Tolko has formally submitted plans for logging developments in Grass River Provincial Park, even though the area has been closed to logging for decades because it is caribou habitat.

Tolko is a private logging corporation licensed to log public land in Forest Management License Areas 2, which covers roughly two-fifths of Manitoba's forests. Their forest license overlaps Grass River and Paint Lake Provincial Parks, and includes the critical habitat of highly endangered herds of woodland caribou.

"Something bad is going on here," said Lee Theriault, a retired logger who has worked near The Pas for 30 years. "Tolko is destroying every last section of intact forest, and driving the caribou out."

"Tolko has been authorized by the Manitoba government to log one of the last remaining safe havens for an endangered woodland caribou herd, and is now trying to expand their operations in a provincial park." said Eric Reder, Campaign Director for the Wilderness Committee. "The government is absolutely failing Manitobans on this issue. We need more protection of our parks and caribou habitat, for everyone's benefit."

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