



September 22, 2009

**Investments for
forest industry innovation:
UMQ welcomes government's initiative
and urges further efforts**

The Québec Union of Municipalities (UMQ) is delighted with the announcement by Vice-Premier Nathalie Normandeau, as minister of Natural Resources and Wildlife and minister responsible for the Northern Plan, that the government will invest over \$11 million in new funding for promotion, development and innovation in the province's forest industry. The UMQ sees this as a first step in the right direction to guarantee a future for the forest industry. The UMQ, as readers will recall, strongly insisted on the need to invest in innovation during the public hearings on Bill 57, the Forest Occupancy Act (*Loi sur l'occupation du territoire forestier*).

"Last September, I urged the minister of Natural Resources and Wildlife to show leadership in supporting innovation and a dynamic marketing plan for Québec forest products. I'm happy to see that the UMQ's message has been heard," said UMQ president Robert Coulombe, mayor of Maniwaki.

For the UMQ, the future of the forest sector is a priority. The UMQ reiterates that it remains imperative for Québec to adopt a policy to promote the best possible use of all categories of wood fibre derived from our forests, whether on public or privately owned lands.

"Searching out growth niches remains an arduous task, and in view of the crisis we are in, the Québec government has a responsibility to encourage the growth of businesses that work on developing high value-added products. Yesterday's announcement is a positive move and I'm very pleased. However, these efforts must be accompanied by a real economic development policy for the forest sector.

The UMQ is working on such a policy at this time and will be glad to share its ideas with the minister and her colleagues," added Gérald Lemoine, mayor of Lebel-sur-Quévillon, James Bay, and chairman of the UMQ forest committee.

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