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## Statement to the Press

by MRC Pontiac Warden, Michael McCrank  
following a special meeting of the MRC's Strategic  
Development Committee on the Smurfit-Stone mill closing

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**CAMPBELL'S BAY, Oct 20, 2008**—MRC Pontiac Mayors, CLD, SADC, and MRC representatives met tonight to discuss Smurfit-Stone's announcement on Friday that it was permanently closing their Pontiac pulp mill located near Portage-du-Fort.

The financial impact of this decision on the 218 employees who are losing their jobs and the domino effect on suppliers, many of whom are small business owners, the self-employed, and the retail and service sectors were all on the agenda in tonight's special Strategic Development Committee meeting.

Forestry has been a mainstay of the Pontiac economy for 150 years, and the Smurfit-Stone pulp mill a significant contributor for the past 40. While we've been expecting the Smurfit-Stone mill closure for some time, it does not diminish our collective concern over our regional economy.

The forestry industry as we've known it may be over, but the MRC strategy to capitalize on new forestry opportunities is not. The MRC Pontiac still has the largest area of crown land for its size in the Outaouais, lending itself to a forest-based economy, but it is clear that it should by no means be our only industry.

The MRC, CLD, and SADC have been working on an economic diversification strategy for some time. We are assured of provincial funding for additional resources which will allow us to fast-track on-going projects and innovative solutions, and the full implementation of our strategy.

There is no doubt that we are facing hard times in the immediate future, but we are confident that with a solid economic development strategy and the necessary resources to implement it, we will overcome our socio-economic difficulties in the not too distant future.

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