AFN Special Chiefs Assembly
December 9-11, 2008 Ottawa, ON

Resolution no. 67/2008

SUBJECT:	Support for BC First Nations – Mountain Pine Beetle Crisis
MOVED BY:	Chief Bill Williams, Squamish First Nation, BC
SECONDED BY:	Grand Chief Doug Kelly, Proxy, Shwx'ow'hamil, BC
DECISION:	Carried by consensus

WHEREAS:

A. The Conservative Party of Canada promised during the 2005-06 federal election, to provide $1 billion in funding to address the mountain pine beetle crisis in BC, but so far has committed only 20% of that funding and actually spent even less. There was no new funding mentioned in the 2008 federal budget.

B. First Nations in BC have received only a minimal portion of the funding that has been committed to address the pine beetle crisis.

C. The Federal Government has ignored repeated requests to work with BC First Nations and the province of BC to address the pine beetle crisis through a politicial-level tripartite panel.

D. The Federal Government ignored a unanimous recommendation in June 2008 from the Natural Resources committee to set up such a panel and to address the crisis immediately by providing necessary resources.

E. 103 First Nations communities in BC are located in the 13.5 milion hectares of pine beetle destruction zones, where dead and dying timber adds greatly to fire threats.

F. These 103 First Nations have experienced the growing threats of serious fires over recent summers and have survived so far by good fortune, they require resources to accelerate the planning and execution of fire-break clearing to make our communities safe.

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PHIL FONTAINE, NATIONAL CHIEF

G. Addressing the pine beetle crisis and the need for forest-fire prevention resources is necessary in order to ensure the long-term economic and cultural survival of the 103 affected First Nations in BC. It is essential for these First Nations to have the capacity, and resources, to respond to the changing forest environment and to create a sustainable future for their children.

H. Federal opposition parties have indicated they support the Government of Canada taking action to address the pine beetle crisis.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that:

1. The Chiefs-in-Assembly ask the National Chief to write to the government expressing the Assembly of First Nations' support for, and seeking government action on, the following points:

    i. The immediate establishment of a high-level tripartite panel of senior federal and provincial ministers and BC First Nations leaders to create a response plan and prioritize the work schedules;

    ii. Provision of the necessary funding from its promised $1-billion mountain pine beetle budget to permit priority work to begin this winter on the clearing of fire breaks, and to ensure wildfire-response and evacuation plans are in place for communities by next summer;

    iii. Commitment to a longer-term accelerated funding plan to complete the firebreak work and to help affected First Nations build the capacity to engage in bio fuel and other economic initiatives;

    iv. Direction from the Ministers of Natural Resources and Indian Affairs to their departments to ensure that First Nations have access to funding programmes to protect their environment, build their economies and seek new markets for forest products, and to ensure that funding is provided in a timely and efficient manner.

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