

Comments to Forestry Committee

By Christopher Allen, Dec. 2003

I'm speaking as a woodlot owner and a citizen very concerned with inappropriate requests made by large wood processing corporations of New Brunswick on our Crown Lands.

I was a member of the local Wood Producers' Association back when the Crown lands and Forests Act was first being discussed. There were a number of public meetings held and hosted by the Department of Natural Resources as well as representatives from the then DNR who spoke at the Wood Producer meetings to inform the public of the reason behind the Crown Lands and Forest Act.

The major idea that was conveyed to the woodlot owners and the public was this concept that our forests were a limited resource, and even with intensive silviculture, every one who worked the forest had to acknowledge there was only a limited amount of trees that could be cut every year or the resource would decline beyond salvation.

The term we all had to work with was "Annual Allowable Cut," or the total amount of trees that could be cut each year that would still sustain the whole integrity of the forest indefinitely.

I remember many Wood Producer meetings after that where we argued long into the night. It was just too incomprehensible at first for some of us to understand that with a set annual allowable cut, we *all* were then stuck with having to share the same volume of wood products indefinitely. So did this mean then that a young wood cutter just getting into the business would never be allowed to grow as big as the larger wood producers who were already established? And so how fair was it that the majority of the wood quotas sat with just a few large producers, and a mass of new producers were left having to scramble forever to survive on a tiny proportion of the left over unchangeable total volume?

The point here is that a totally new concept of reality and our future wrecked havoc on our familiar traditions of how to make a living. As a marketing board we had to acknowledge this new reality of a limited resource and figure out a way to start at an uneven distribution of wood quotas and work to a future situation where we shared the resource as fairly as possible. It was a painful process, but we had to face reality.

Another point I recall from those first public meetings on the future of our forests, was the statement made by a representative from DNR who said that no new pulp processing capacity would be allowed in the province since there was already capacity enough to handle all the wood sustainably cut. The large forestry corporations were obviously also expected to adapt to this new reality.

So here we are today pressured by these large wood processing corporations to hand over our commonly owned forests to them to be controlled, cut, altered, and over exploited by them because in the interim they did not follow their part of the deal that was laid out in the mid 1980's to keep their processing capacity at a sustainable level. In fact, Jim Irving was quoted recently in the November 11, 2003 issue of the Telegraph Journal when he spoke in favor of the Jaako Poyry report at these series of meetings we are having now, that, "*...if we can double the wood supply and, more importantly, **double the manufacturing base in this province then I think we're going some place.***"

Mr. Irving, for one, obviously had no intention way back in the 1980's to figure out a way to sustain his operations at that level, and he still expects to keep expanding his wood processing capacity indefinitely into the future. How aware do you think he is about this new reality of maintaining a limited, but forever, sustainable supply of forest products?

We gave these large forestry corporations the *key* to the door to all the Crown Lands in the 1980's asking them to be the guardians of our common forest in exchange for relatively free access to the Crown wood supply. Now they tell us that somehow the forests have nearly disappeared out that door—and these corporations are *not* accepting their responsibility in the matter.

Once again they are putting the pressure of looming economic catastrophe onto the province. Not only are they *not* acknowledging their irresponsibility in this situation, they are saying if we don't allow them to just *take off* the doors of responsible guardianship to the common forest, and guarantee them the last of the natural resources to their insatiable processing, we will all face economic doom.

Well, the cat is out of the bag! It *is certain* we all face economic doom. It is clear now that it is the *large forestry corporations* that are shutting the door of economic sustainability in our faces and dragging us off the edge of the cliff into certain resource decimation and its resulting poverty. They have never shown that they had any intentions of adapting to the limitations of a limited resource. They have proven that they will keep expanding their processing capacity in the name of business (under the cover of scientific agri-forestry terminology) until there are not enough trees left standing to send a crew after.

I say *shame* on all of you who have disregarded that sustainability concept from the 1980's and misused your opportunity to accept the reality of limited resources that need to be cared for and adapted to in order to have the resource last forever.

Shame on all of you who have blindly followed the "bottom line" mentality—keeping shareholder or personal company profits as your guiding path in life—rather than waking up to reality that these forests are common forests that need to be respected in order for our children's grandchildren to use as freely and, hopefully, as respectfully as we ought to now use them.

Therefore, I conclude by saying, *unless* we are willing to accept certain economic doom by continuing to allow these large forestry corporations to act as they have already shown us (much less even think about adopting this Jaakko Poyry report), I strongly recommend to this committee that you begin the process of **dismantling** the benefits previously given to the large wood processing corporations through the Crown Lands and Forest Act.

I strongly recommend that you start the process to *reassign* the care and control of *all* Crown Lands to the local communities to oversee their areas of common land for all those who have vested interests in the forests provided they demonstrate a fundamental interest in the long-term health and vitality of the natural forest.

The large corporations have clearly shown us they are *incapable* of properly caring for the common forests, so give the forests back to the people before we are all ruined!