

Thank you for the opportunity to address the issue of the Crown Lands in New Brunswick. I would like to talk about the subject under two headings, the social aspect, and the environmental aspect of where we are going with these publicly owned lands.

My first point is to reiterate what the crown lands are: That is, lands held IN TRUST by the government for the benefit of the people of this province. The proposed agreement would take these lands from the control of the government, and thus from the control of the people, and give the authority for decision-making to the industrial companies. That, I think, would be a failure of stewardship on the part of the government. Let's remember that the people in power right now, are only the Government for a short time, but that the decisions that they are being asked to make, bind us for a long time into the future.

What should be the focus of the government in power? I think it should be the good of the greatest number of the citizens of the province. In this instance, it has to do with jobs being there for as many people as possible. Does this agreement hold the greatest promise of the greatest number of jobs for people? I don't think so; the industrial model always seeks to shrink the worker component of a plan, not maximize. I would ask the committee to consider the job-based, community based model of Community Forestry, where the forest lands are managed BY the community, FOR the good of the community. I won't expand on this here, since there are others who have thought about it a lot more than I have. But the difference in focus between the community based, or the industrial based, theories of how to manage the woods, mirror the tension so evident today in so many questions, between local control of our resources, versus giving that control to multinationals who have no concern for local conditions, only really their bottom lines. I'm not necessarily accusing them of bad stewardship, though I think there is a lot of that; but the concept of giving up local control, leaves people disenfranchised in their own communities. We see that on many fronts: consolidated school systems leave no room for local participation; consolidated hospital

systems leave small communities with no stake in a faceless health care system. We should be supporting our local small communities, farming and forestry, instead of introducing industrial models that make people irrelevant on a local level.

Why is the emphasis on increasing a wood supply of inferior quality? One of the new businesses announced in Belledune is for turning inferior wood into a superior wood, with glue, or chemicals, or dyes, or something. Why can't we put our energies into increasing the job pool by adding value to our quality resource, and selling a finished product? If the wood supply were to be used by our own citizens to produce goods for sale, instead of cut and shipped, with much of the profit going out of the country, we would increase the provincial prosperity level a great deal. Some of this is being done now, but much more could be done, given government vision and support.

The fact that, not only do these recommendations remove the influence of the people from decisions affecting their place, but additionally seek to penalize the people if wood supply targets are not met, I think is one of the worst points of the report. In this industrial scenario, targets are set, management decisions are made, tree farms are planted, then infestation happens. This is an inevitable result of monoculture, we see it in agriculture too. Monoculture systems have to propped up by artificial means—herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers.

The target agreements would absolutely tie the hands of the government in regulating the kinds of practices used on these plantations. I remember the Malathion spraying a generation ago, of the spruce budworm. I remember how difficult it was, THEN, to get the government to look at its toxicity and pull it from use. This agreement would DISALLOW the government, which is supposed to be the watchdog for the health of the population, from making a decision to pull a toxic pesticide from use if the industry had decided it was the best option for pest control, by the penalties requested. I can't believe that this penalties question is even on the table!

Now, to move to the environmental questions. The call to cut in the hard-won buffer zones is certainly disregarding all available understanding of riparian ecology. The safety of our water supply should be paramount in the minds of government officials. Stream buffers are essential for healthy water systems, as well as fish habitat. The buffer zones should be strengthened, if anything, not reduced.

The protected areas were protected for a reason: animal and plant ecology are intertwined of course, and you won't have natural animal populations unless you have their habitat intact. And what is the point of preserving natural systems? The major answer for me is that we don't know everything there is to know about these natural systems. I don't think we ever will. Cutting them down will give us no chance to find out what we don't know yet. The industrial wood supply model is reductionist: let's grow a lot of softwood, one species, NOW, because that's what will be most profitable. Whereas the natural system itself is multi-faceted, giving us many benefits, some of the most important of which are not factored into the money economy, like oxygen, and a cleaner air supply; a higher water table: large-rooted mature trees hold more water in the ground than the clear-cut/plantations would; the spiritual sense of being a part of the natural world, instead of separated from and destructive of it.

My own interest in human health and nutrition over the last 25 years has shown me that the human body is like an ecosystem; reductionist medical models have looked for a long time at different body systems as if they were isolated from each other. That, in my opinion, is why systemic diseases like cancer, heart disease and arthritis, are problems that have really not been solved, because they call for whole-body analysis, instead of just organ by organ examination. And our environment suffers from the same attitude, though new graduates of forestry schools and environmental ecologists are making some headway against the reductionist attitude. Our Earth is one whole system; its parts work together to give us the means to live, air, water, food.. We fiddle with natural systems at our peril, and I think we are seeing the results in the oceans, with collapsing fish populations; in agriculture, with pesticide pollution and depleted soils (as well as nutritionally depleted food), in air quality, with available oxygen levels way down, asthma in the human population way up.

Environmentalists have been accused of being "against progress". But I have to ask you, what IS progress? Is planting monocultures so as to have faster turn-around of a limited wood-use, really progress? Is the industrial forest model, forcing production at the expense of quality, progress? Is the loss of OUR control over OUR crown lands, progress? Or do we want a long-term vision that will give us more options, value added wood products, community forestry keeping jobs on the local level, close attention to preserving those natural systems that will keep us a healthy vital community in the long term? We people are a part of the ecosystem, and we forget that at our peril as a species.

So I would ask you, as elected representatives of the people of New Brunswick, to look at your responsibility to the people, and make recommendations that will be to our long-term benefit. I am asking for a forest management system that is people-oriented, not industry-oriented. The movement today is always toward "streamlining", and "efficiency". But in the long-term, what is better for the people? You know, democracy is messy; takes a long time, lots of discussion. Dictatorship is faster, neater. But democracy is the best we have, messiness and all. I would ask you to consider the forestry questions with that in mind: should we be looking at our natural systems always for industrial efficiency, or should we be treating them more carefully for the multitude of benefits they provide as natural systems? Democracy is messy, a people-based wood supply system is maybe not as "efficient" as the industrial model, but it's the best we could have. We could then make the decisions about our jobs and environment ourselves, rather than abdicating our responsibilities to multinational corporations, whose interest is in the bottom line, not in the environment and population of New Brunswick.

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