

Presentation to the Select Committee on Wood Supply

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I would like to thank the committee for this opportunity to speak on the issue of the future of Crown lands management in New Brunswick. To my mind, this is among the most important debates facing our province today. Since the Tweedale Commission in the 1970's, this is the first time that there has been a formal opportunity for the citizens of New Brunswick to provide input into Crown lands policy. I am hoping that these public hearings will lead to crucial and progressive changes to Crown lands management that will be positive for both our Acadian forests and our forest-related jobs.

As the Committee on Wood Supply, you are carrying a significant responsibility for the people of this province. The Province of New Brunswick holds jurisdiction over Crown lands subject to aboriginal and treaty claims (Constitution Act 1982, Section 35). This jurisdiction is held as a trustee. (Supreme Court Decision *R. v. Robertson* (1882) 6 S.C.R. 52). This means Crown lands are a public trust – a trust held for the benefit of all people, including future generations. As a committee, you are charged with advising the government on how best to fulfill this trusteeship. The question before you is how to use the forest resources of New Brunswick to benefit to the greatest number of citizens and to undertake these activities in such a manner that we leave sufficient forest resource to provide livelihoods for our children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The forests of New Brunswick are an amazing and valuable heritage. We live in the Acadian forest which exists in only the Maritimes and Maine. The Acadian forest is comprised of 39 tree species, both hardwood and softwood, and is one of the most diverse forests at our latitude. This diversity provides us, the people of New Brunswick, with opportunities. Because we have diverse forests, we can make a wide range of wood products. We can have industries that are based on maple, birch, cedar and pine. We can produce products and lumber from softwood. We can produce maple syrup, Christmas wreaths and Taxol from ground hemlock. We can make guitar tops, and baseball bats and furniture. And we can make pulp and paper. The sky is the limit. Unlike many places that only have a few tree species, we are not restricted in our options.

Not only do we in New Brunswick have this diverse forest, we also are fortunate in that 50% of this forest is publicly owned. This provides us with an opportunity to develop diverse options for land tenure that can respond to the forest diversity. There are many models of tenure available that we can explore - community forests, municipal forests and small individual tenure. These models of tenure can lead to greater benefits for the people of the province. Communities with access to Crown lands could develop a wide array of forest industries based upon our natural forest resource. (Managing for Seven Generations on Crown Land, Falls Brook Centre, 2003)

According to the Jaakko Poyry report, "New Brunswick's forests are the province's most valuable resource." (p. 21). Yet the report recommends transforming 40% of this valuable and diverse forest into monoculture plantations. The report acknowledges that this conversion will result in smaller, poorer quality trees (p 48). It makes no sense to

proceed with this approach. Any attempt to turn our natural forests into plantations will come at a high economic and environmental cost.

As reported in our newspapers, the pulp and paper industry in Canada is subject to boom and bust market conditions (Telegraph-Journal, Oct 30 & 31, 2003). It is not acceptable to have a public resource, such as our forests, primarily dedicated to enterprises that are consistently reducing employment. Investments in the pulp and paper industry are moving south to tropical areas where trees grow faster and labour is cheaper (<http://www.wrm.org.uy/bulletin/13/plantations2.html>). The Jaakko Poyry report claims that the way to address the difficulty with investments is through plantations and attempting to provide the industry with an ever-increasing supply of wood (p. 42). This will not work on two fronts. Firstly, the forest ecosystem is finite. There is not an ever-increasing land base or an ever-increasing supply of wood. Secondly, because of efficiencies within the sector, we are losing jobs in the forest sector while increasing the quantity of production and using more timber (Statistics Canada, Table 281-0001, from 2001). The problem will continue to occur as long as we are solely focused on competing with tropical countries that can grow trees much faster than we can. The way out of this cycle is to develop industries which aim for value-added and higher quality products based on our natural diverse forests.

In order to provide a larger wood supply now, the Jaakko-Poyry report recommends increasing the harvest in the special management zones such as deer wintering areas and the buffer zones along streams and rivers. In a system that favours aggressive cutting regimes such as clearcutting, special management zones which reduce the harvest in some areas are essential for maintaining water supply and species populations. The report suggests that New Brunswick has dedicated a greater amount of forest for special management than other jurisdictions. This is not accurate. For example, in Maine, 33% of public lands are in some form of protection (Mitch Lansky, 2003).

Environmentally, increasing plantations will require increased herbicide spraying. Herbicide spraying has significant impacts on forest ecology, killing all of the broadleaf plants and severely impacting those species dependent upon them. (Falls Brook Centre, A Review of Ecological Effects of Biocides Proposed for Use in FSC Certified Forests of the Northeast United States and Eastern Canada, 2001 and At the Cutting Edge, Elizabeth May, 1998). As well, herbicides have serious human health impacts. Converting 40% of our landscape to plantations will mean a loss of 40% of the habitat for many of the 30,000 species that live in our diverse forest.

I live near the Fundy Crown license. This area of Crown lands already is comprised of about 50% plantations. This has given me a close up view of the problems. In the Fundy license, there are 25 year-old jack pine plantations that are being clear-cut this fall because they are not working out very well. They were stunted and crooked and last winter they suffered more severe ice damage than natural forests (personal conversation, DNR). Plantations are also more vulnerable to pests and disease. After a plantation is clearcut, there is absolutely nothing remaining on the ground. In fact, from what I saw, the stream buffers are not even respected. The natural regeneration is pretty well guaranteed - the same monoculture tree species will have reseeded itself. This means that prime hardwood stands, once converted to plantations will have lost their capacity to replant themselves as a hardwood forest. A total conversion has taken place.

Although the Jaakko Poyry report does acknowledge that the plantation forestry experiment practiced in Finland has had some environmental problems, the tone of the report suggests that this is a model to be followed. Other reports paint a dire environmental situation. (Policies of Destruction, Greenpeace, 2002 and Finnish Forestry; Destroying forests, destroying livelihoods, Greenpeace, 2003) In Finland, out of 20,000 forest species, 62 forest species have faced extinction, 564 are threatened and 416 are near threatened. (The 2000 Red List of Finnish Species, Ministry of the Environment, 2000)

The Jaakko Poyry report recommends fiscally binding guarantees of wood supply. According to Jaakko Poyry, this has not been done in any other jurisdiction of which they know (personal conversation, Feb 2003). That statement speaks for itself. How can the New Brunswick government consider committing the taxpayers of this province to an agreement to compensate the multinational pulp and paper companies for shortfalls in wood supply should future governments implement policy changes? As well, how would the government of New Brunswick ever be able to adequately address outstanding land claim and treaty issues with First Nations? These political questions are the most serious questions generated by this report. Over time, the values of a society change and we must ensure that we maintain sufficient flexibility for future governments to be able to make policy appropriate to their times.

When one looks at the issues of 40% plantations, ever-increasing wood supply, a fiscally binding guarantee of wood supply and increased cutting along rivers and streams and in deer-wintering areas, it is hard to believe that this report is given any credence at all. What would the implementation of this report lead to? It is clear. It would lead to heavy job losses in the forest sector, severe conflicts over land use, and a lack of flexibility for future governments to make decisions about our public forests. As the authors of this report clearly hope, we, as a province, would be locked into the “Finnish” system.

The province of New Brunswick needs a progressive industrial forest strategy. We need to develop a strategy that suits the forest that grows in New Brunswick, instead of a strategy to turn the forest into wood supply to suit the needs of the pulp and paper industry. A “made for the New Brunswick forest” industrial forest strategy would focus on developing diverse quality products from our diverse forest. It would ensure that timber harvested in the province was turned into a value-added product. Such a strategy would favour quality over quantity. This strategy would build on all of the forest resources including wildlife, recreation, water and non-timber forest products. It would maximize the number of jobs created through the forest sector industry.

A progressive industrial forest strategy would recognize that the forest ecosystem is the basis of wealth for this province. In order to ensure that wealth continues into the future, we must maintain the forest as a healthy and viable ecosystem. Such a strategy would harvest the forest at a rate that is sustainable and ensures jobs for the future. It would be based on sound and progressive scientific management principles of ecological forestry such as uneven-aged management and mixed species composition. Over time, markets change. By developing a diverse industrial forest strategy, New Brunswick will be able to more easily adjust to the market conditions. We would not be subject to the fluctuations of a single sector.

The set of hearings undertaken by this committee in order to review Crown lands management is a huge task. This task is made even more difficult by the set of particular circumstances under which this committee is working. Firstly, the document that frames the hearings has been produced by industry. This is in stark contrast to a discussion document or white paper produced by government. A government white paper would outline the government position on the issue or provide options that the government is interested in pursuing and invite citizens to provide their views and opinions. In the case of this current set of hearings, citizens are forced to respond to an industry agenda without knowing the intent or the will of the government.

To make matters worse, the Government of New Brunswick invested \$150,000 of public money into this industry report. This money was provided in order that the consultants would answer 4 questions. The response to those 4 questions comprises only 3 pages of the report. This is a cost of \$50,000 a page. Although government provided this funding for the industry study, there was no government money available to assist public interest groups in developing alternate visions for the forests of New Brunswick. The non-profit groups are further hampered because, despite a request under the Right to Information Act, they have been unable to access the data that underlies the recommendations in the Jaakko-Poyry report.

Thirdly, the committee is working in a climate of intimidation and repression. In order to fully explore all the issues, the committee needs access to unbiased expertise on a range of topics including biodiversity, low impact forest management, pesticides, land tenure and employment in the forest sector. However, the committee is hindered by the reality that the bulk of the experts in this province are not able to speak freely. Many of them work for the companies that are advancing the plan. Many others work for the provincial government and have been asked not to appear before the committee. The committee therefore must ensure that it finds sufficient expertise among non-profit groups, universities and federal agencies such as National Parks and the Canadian Forest Service. As well, the committee can look abroad to experts such as Mitch Lansky in Maine and Greenpeace in Finland.

Finally, the committee must recognize that the arms of the forest industry in this province are long. I know that many non-profits have been approached by industry and directed to keep a low profile during these hearings. This is a tragic loss to the entire debate and to the future of the province.

I would like to end my presentation with a couple of stories. The first is the ecological history of Easter Island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. In about 400 AD two large canoes set out from Polynesia. They contained agricultural supplies, including chickens, and about 50 people. You can imagine their joy when they landed on the shores of Easter Island. They had come to a new home, forested with palm trees and about 30 other species. By most measures this is a limited but functioning eco-system.

The Easter Islanders cleared forests for farm land. But, as time progressed, the real measure of wealth of a clan become their huge rock statues or moai. The production and movement of moai took trees. And the clans furiously made more and more moai. To make a long story short, eventually Easter Island was deforested to the point in which

most of the other species became extinct. The last of the palm trees was cut down in the 1800's. Without forests, the water resources on the island deteriorated to the point of being muddy, and the capacity of the land to support agriculture diminished as well. To top it all off, there were no more trees large enough to build boats to get off the island. What did the Islanders do, now that they found themselves in this dilemma? Well, the clans went to war against each other, and, they ate each other. After all, they had to eat something.

The second story is much closer to home. It is the story of what was once the world's most productive fishery. This is a story of people who lived on an island of rock and took their sustenance from the sea, one cod at a time. It is the story of how those people were displaced by freezer trawlers that scraped the ocean floor, took everything, and left a path of destruction in its wake.

Like both the Newfoundlanders and the Easter Islanders, we are dependent upon our habitat. In New Brunswick, our habitat is the forest. And, we are on the brink of a decision. We can continue on our current path, consuming the resources faster than the forest's capacity to regenerate, slashing jobs in favour of machines, ensuring the profits of the multinational corporations at the loss of community forest development. Or, we can turn and begin to head down a progressive road. We can diversify the tenure system and include community forest options. We can increase the number of jobs in our forest sector and improve the quality of our forest and forest products, thereby ensuring long term economic success. What do the people of this province want? We all want the same thing. We all want healthy forests and wildlife, a strong, diverse economy and Crown lands that are managed for the benefit of all the people.

I would like to make the following four recommendations to the committee.

- 1) Ensure that you hear from experts, in every field, who are able to speak independently.
- 2) Ask the government to draft a white paper on Crown lands and establish hearings in which the public is invited to offer their opinions on the government's position.
- 3) Incorporate alternate tenure systems into the Crown Lands and Forests Act.
- 4) Address First Nation's aboriginal and treaty rights.