

November 25, 2003

Select Committee on Wood Supply  
Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick  
Fredericton, N.B. E3B 5H1

Dear Honorable Committee Members:

This note is prepared in response to issues raised by the Jakko Poyry (JP) Report and their possible influence on New Brunswick forestry policy. The findings and recommendations of the JP Report are problematic for several reasons.

The use of Nordic European countries as models of intensive forest management is problematic when applied to New Brunswick given the former occurs largely on private lands, yet the prescription is for application to public lands here. In fact, intensive, plantation-based forestry is widely used on private lands worldwide, but rarely on public lands, and for good reason. The kinds of investments and management control required are simply not likely forthcoming over the long term from public agencies, which will invariably face changing political and economic priorities over time. The suggestion that these tenure considerations be addressed through the use of legally-binding, long-term leases and wood production guarantees represents a dangerous public policy move, all the more so given the real possibility that aboriginal rights claims be raised over some of these same lands in the future.

The environmental consequences of large-scale conversion to conifer plantations raises many serious concerns, each one likely to be exacerbated in coming decades by expected climate warming. The natural acadian forests of the region are already so badly impacted and reduced in area, with so little strictly protected, that further massive erosion of this habitat will result in significant biodiversity loss in the region. The long term effects of acidic needle fall on soil quality and productivity in areas formerly under mixed hardwood-conifer stands is also largely unknown, but potentially serious.

Perhaps most important is the greater vulnerability to fires, insect pests and disease pathogens that will result as greater and greater areas of forest are homogenized. This fact, alone, should be reason to pause and seriously re-think the recommendations being considered here. The situation in British Columbia with the unprecedented mountain pine beetle outbreak occurring in the wake of a modest climate warming trend should be warning to all forest managers that the future is laden with growing uncertainties. Given this, our long-term planning should seek to increase our range of adaptive policy and management options. Large-scale establishment of mono-culture plantations does the complete opposite.

Finally, the timing of the JP report is puzzling given that many European countries (Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Czech Republic, etc.) are now aggressively shifting *away* from single-species conifer plantation forestry and back to more natural, mixed-broadleaf forest management. They are doing this for a variety of reasons, among them the desire to manage landscapes in a manner more consistent with ecological conditions and processes, including anticipated climate change. Consider, for example, the following quote from a recent summary of an expert meeting on the subject: "... *there were adverse effects of pure Norway spruce stands like soil acidification, slowing down nutrient cycle, and shallow rooting, as well as their high susceptibility to wind throw and snow-breakage and against bark beetles, and a number of pathogen fungi. On the other side, mixed stands were found to be more resistant to various forms of damage, more diverse in their fauna and flora composition and better adapted to expected global climate changes than pure, single-species stands. And finally, broadleaves were expected to improve the growth conditions through their less acidic litter.*" (see: "Question of Conversion of Coniferous Forests", European Forest Institute (EFI) & International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), 2003; <http://iufro.boku.ac.at/iufro/news/newslet.htm#enotes>).

These changes lead me to think that Jakko Poyry's message is both narrow-minded and out-of-step with changing perspectives and priorities in European forestry. In this regard, the Committee would be wise to look more carefully at the lessons learned from the larger, European forestry experience.

Sincerely Yours,

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cc: Hon. Peter Mesheau, Sackville MLA  
Hon. Keith Ashfield, Minister of Natural Resources