

Report to Select Committee on Wood Supply
December 4, 2003
3:00 p.m.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for their time and effort to hear the information being presented to them, including my report today.

My name is Frank Vandenborre. I was born and raised in rural New Brunswick. I am a graduate of the Forest Management Program at UNB, I work for a local value-added forest products company owned by a local family. I am an avid hunter and fisherman and have interest in a local hunting camp on crown leased land. I snowmobile, have an ATV and a cottage on a nearby lake. I would consider myself an average and very fortunate New Brunswicker. I am a father of three children whom I hope grow up and settle down in New Brunswick so they too can enjoy and experience the same New Brunswick I have and more.

The company I work for is Marwood Ltd. just outside of Fredericton. We employ over 300 people and have recently purchased two small, family owned sawmills. We are a sub-licensee to all 10 licenses in the province and I have covered many acres of this province over the past 15 years. One of the products we make is utility poles and our largest customer is NBPower. In New Brunswick we have two tree species that we can use to make poles, red and jack pine. We sell approximately 20 000 poles per year and secure around 2000 from crown allocations. The remaining poles come from Quebec, Ontario and the New England States, mostly New York. We are a value added company with red pine as one of our requirements. This makes us quite unique in the province.

Red pine propagates very well naturally after a fire, which someone readily puts out every time I start one (a joke of course) or by exposing the soil. Through conventional harvest methods and our aversion to big fires and runoff, the only opportunity for us to ensure a future that includes red pine is to plant it. Red pine poles pays one of the highest stumpage's to the province and if we can harvest it here it saves us from having to import from Quebec or New York. We have been saying for years that it would make complete sense to grow more of it and manage it to produce more poles per hectare than it does now. So don't think we weren't happy to hear that we had other "experts" thinking that growing more trees is a good thing and hoping that planting red pine would be a consideration. (I do not have the time today to go into anymore detail on the potential for red pine stands in the province but would be happy to discuss it outside of this half hour). Contrary to what I have heard previously, I see many opportunities to increase yield of this species and others throughout the province, no matter the markets, the climate or the competition. We will always need softwood and hardwoods, pulp and veneer, harvesting and conservation.

I have read and reread the Jaakko Poyry Report, which seems to be an instrument by which to start an argument throughout these hearings and I would like to speak a little bit about that report. The report is by no means forestry gospel nor is it anything more than we have known or experienced ourselves. The report is however, one of the many tools we should consider as we

set the goals for the future of New Brunswick forestry. I am neither down playing it nor putting it on a pedestal as it is what it is, a report on a portion of the New Brunswick forest and industry. And that concludes the controversial Jaakko Poyry Report. I am sorry much of your time has been spent hearing more than this on that report.

To set a few simple precursors to the rest of this presentation, I would like the committee to keep in mind that forest industry is a necessity to this mainly rural province; from pulp to veneer and everything in between. Trees are a renewable resource and one of the ways to keep our economy steady, or better yet, growing, is to match the resource to the industry; simple economics. As companies working in this province, as foresters and as everyday citizens we have an obligation...more than an obligation...to ensure that we pass along a province and a forest to the next generation that they in turn will be proud to pass along. And I think everyone in this room would agree to this. We are all here to achieve the same goals.

So if that is the case, why then all the arguing, controversy and separation of two basic camps; industry and environmentalists...and I must say I struggled to use those two terms as I feel I fall into the category of both, as would many people in this room. Is it human nature that we take up a side on an issue and end up in one camp or the other and because we choose one camp, we automatically oppose the other? As committee members before me, I am sure you know this first hand. You are Conservative, Liberal and NDP (and please don't read anything into the order I just read) but you all want what is best for New Brunswick and all have your own path to get there. Industry, as stewards of the bulk of the Crown forest through guidelines set by DNR, are asking to improve the process and the resource without affecting the integrity of the guidelines. The other camp argues against it, not necessarily even listening to the message, but because they are the other camp. We all have a bad habit of forming an opinion well before we open our ears and minds. The forest industry is necessary for the province of New Brunswick to function economically and New Brunswick's environment is necessary for industry to operate. Industry is

asking for help; help to grow and therefore benefit the economy of the province, and help to do it without adverse effects on everything else that concerns us as citizens. We could say great, lets put the wheels in motion, here are some experts and information we have to ensure everything does not change and as a province we can reap the benefits. Or we could continue with what I have experienced far too much, and try everything in our power to discredit any proposal because it came from the other camp. It is so much easier to condemn than congratulate.

We spend way too much time fussing over who is going to drive the bus rather than the destination. We seem to agree where we want to go but there is always the "I'll be damned if I am getting on that bus with that driver". Are there obstacles? yes, do we have all the answers? I would suggest the answers are a moving target that we will always be chasing and changing.

There has been and will continue to be much debate over many issues. Below is a list of what I feel to be some of the major issues to resolve before moving toward increasing the amount of wood grown on a given hectare of crown land (and like my reading of the political parties, this is of no particular order):

1. Monoculture/Tree Farms

2. Community Forests
3. Special Management Areas Harvesting
4. DNR Staffing
5. Certification
6. Primary Source of Wood Supply
7. Jobs

There are others but these seem to get things stirred up the most and will be the focus of the next few minutes of this report.

Monoculture or tree farms comes with the topic of planting, one form of silviculture used to reestablish a forest. It is very closely connected to the topic of biodiversity for plant as well as wildlife species. As I mentioned above, there are some species, red and jack pine for instance, that propagate in pure stands or monocultures. Throughout the province you can also find pure stands of birch, poplar, larch and cedar. Monocultures is not a bad thing within reason. Spruce is the tree of choice for the pulp and most sawmills in New Brunswick (mostly market driven). As a society we use more pulp products than we do veneer. Spruce is the choice species for many planting operations. Spruce plantations can occur without the death of the province's biodiversity, much like marshes, bogs, fields and lakes. Many examples exist in New Brunswick, the history and information is all there to make an informed decision on the mix and layout required to maintain or improve our biodiversity. And when we speak of biodiversity, let's consider ourselves in that formula. We do not want to lose a species of insect nor do we want to lose a species of forest worker.

Community Forests is what we have now in rural New Brunswick. It is what I call a buzz word with a whole lot of baggage attached. They have been around in Europe for several centuries and in the U.S. since the early 1900's. The only difference between the structure we have now with DNR managing crown land and "community forests" is the bus driver. Ultimately there has to be a profit made from the forest. History shows us that tree harvesting in New Brunswick provides that profit, more than any other use. And where does the profit from the harvest go now?, the province uses it to operate health care, education and many other programs that all of New Brunswick benefits from. How can you get any more "community" than that?. That is not to say that the current system could not be improved upon and I will go into more detail on this later in this report.

Special Management Area Harvesting makes me chuckle. I find it funny that we can dig and haul away gravel right up to the side of a running river, plow a field right to a river side, build a home or cottage on the bank of a lake, allow machinery in a river to create a salmon pool and even construct a 4 lane highway through a protected area, but heaven forbid you harvest a tree. Why not harvest in these areas with minimal infrastructure changes and only if there will be no adverse effects on what is being specially managed. It can be done.

DNR Staffing has become a topic because of a mention in the Jaakko Poyry Report that Ontario streamlined their provincial department of natural resources. Let's not get riled up over nothing, we are not Ontario, industry is not suggesting DNR here reduce their staff by 70%, like Ontario, or by any amount for that matter. Let us not forget the Gun Registry, which should have been a

by-law for the city of Toronto rather than a federal law that included rural New Brunswick. We have to make decisions that work for New Brunswick, but isn't it great to have the experience to call upon from across the country and around the world.

Certification is a good thing. To have a set of practices and goals that are audited annually by an unbiased third party is good. Could it be better? always, but it is one step better than not having a certification process in place. The more checks and balances in place the better the end result. Most controversy on certification can be attributed to which certification is/was chosen. I would suggest that the stewards of the forest cannot be the auditors as well. This leaves the door open for possible conflicts of interest. DNR, representing the people of New Brunswick, should be and are the auditors. I must admit that I do have one problem with the whole certification issue though (I have explained it below for you to read but do to time constraints, I will not read through it now), and that is, I really do not see it as being necessary for a small province like New Brunswick with a provincial forest under management of the people of New Brunswick. There is a management plan carried out and evaluated or audited by the DNR. The only difference is, some markets or customers will not except anything but a recognized "certified" stamp of approval. It may have nothing to do with how well the forest is actually being managed. The DNR stamp of approval gets no recognition and it should carry the same weight, if not more, than the certifiers out there. And because this is not recognized, I find it a shame to be forced into an added expense for an "expert" to tell us we are doing things right with no return on that investment. Also, I would like to mention that the SFI certification could have been better handled on the provincial level rather than asking individual licensees and sub-licensees to look after it themselves, here is your deadline. It has created an unlevel playing field amongst users of the same Crown land. This could have been a DNR staff function.

Primary Source of Wood Supply is a concern brought about by private land owners in the province who market their wood to industry in New Brunswick. The concern is that private wood is competing with Crown wood and this will get worse with any increase in fiber off of Crown land. This is a touchy subject, as it too should be sustainable, but it is private wood and it has been difficult to monitor. Also, when markets are good and prices are up so is the harvest from private woodlots. This should be manageable, flexible and monitored so that when prices and private harvests are up, Crown harvest could decrease and vice versa. If the annual allowable cut were controlled on private land, an agreement made that the supply would be constant and prices negotiable depending on market, the answer would probably be easy. We should and are working towards an agreeable solution with marketing boards and woodlot owners. Marketing Boards and woodlot owners....that has a community forest ring to it! I too am a private woodlot owner.

Jobs is always a great question and one requiring a crystal ball of some kind. There is no doubt that there will be jobs created with an increase in silviculture activities to increase the amount of wood grown on a hectare of ground. Simple answer. This simple answer gets clouded when there are jobs being lost in the forest industry due to other issue such as markets, mechanization, lack of human resources and others. It is necessary to keep the two separate so we are comparing apples to apples when looking at job creation promises and losses. As always, there is the question of whether the human resources match the types of jobs that will be added. But we can't all be politicians, fact of life.

I would like to point out to the committee that this a process that needs to consider the needs of all New Brunswick. These hearings are being overwhelmed with presentations from interest groups and not necessarily the average New Brunswick public. We know they have an interest in these hearings but are either too busy to attend, too shy to speak out or just reserved, waiting to hear the outcome of a debate waged by the interested parties that are participating. No matter what, if they are not heard, they at least must be considered when you in turn make your report. If you could take the time to speak to our employees, the contractors harvesting the wood as we speak, the truckers, all of whom you would never catch at a meeting like this, I think your recommendations would come to you quite easily. Also, in fairness to the public that is not present at these meetings, I think they realize you do not send a carpenter to fix a plumbers problem so they are leaving these meetings to the experts to work things out, let's not fail them.

Our forest is a renewable resource. Unlike any mining industry, we have the opportunity to grow back and improve the resource we use. Coming from the village of Minto, I know all too well the results of a failed industry. When the coal and Grand Lake Power Plant are gone, so will the back bone of one village in rural New Brunswick. I would not wish that fate on any community in New Brunswick that would suffer the same fate, with closures to industry dependent on the forests of New Brunswick.

My Dad always told me that if you complain about the cooking than you better be prepared to cook, so I would like to take the next few minutes to propose some general solutions or ideas:

- It is a great idea to grow more wood per hectare of ground to expand or preserve an industry. Ask any woodlot owner, we all strive for that same thing through planting, thinning, matching the tree species to the soil type , drainage and any number of other management initiatives.

- We want to maintain or improve our industry, environment, biodiversity and leave it in better shape for the next generation. We have the history, the knowledge, the expertise and the working forest to make it happen. I fail to see why we don't run towards that end.

- Environmentalists do not want monocultures, and I can only assume by that they mean they do not want to see 40% of New Brunswick covered with black spruce. I agree and do not think you will have an argument from industry, so we should be able to resolve this problem quickly. However, there will be fragmented monocultures throughout the New Brunswick landscape without detriment to biodiversity.

- Let's build on the "community" forest we have now. We have a system in place that works. It needs to grow and it needs constant improvement. Wiping the slate clean to start over would not only be changing the bus driver, but changing the bus as well. Also, earlier I had mentioned I would return to this topic of "community forests" and how it could improve; Crown land management should and actually does allow for public input. As part of the management of Crown land, I think industry should look for public input rather than letting public input look for industry because historically public input is after the fact. It is obvious from the response of these meetings that there is a need for more interest group consultation. No need to change the bus driver when there is all kinds of room for navigators and back seat drivers. But the bus doors

have to be open and the passengers willing to get on.

- Industry in New Brunswick is very dependent on private wood supply. N.B. industry imports 13% of the fiber used. I am not sure how much private wood leaves this province but I know it does. The reason for the problems here is solely based on dollars. Private wood moves when and where prices are best. Being from the wood supply side of industry, I know it is better to have the local private wood supply coming into my yard rather than leaving the area. This is simply a matter of negotiating for the benefit of both parties. Simple solution is to have these two entities outline their concerns and solutions. It is sometimes challenging, but achievable.

- As a province, let's be innovative, think outside the box as my brother always says. There are many hectares of abandoned and unused agricultural land in the province. A simple dialogue between two government departments could start a trend towards planting these field for future tree harvests, experimentation with other marketable, renewable resources or even feed plots for wildlife. There are other jurisdictions with programs in place between industry and private lands that would be worthwhile looking at. There are pulp mills out west using grass as a wood fiber substitute. Nothing should be out of our possibility range to at least give it some thought. Open our ears and minds before our mouths.

In conclusion, I want to point out to the committee the importance of the task at hand. I leave you four key points to making your recommendations, that will gain you the trust and respect of the New Brunswick public:

- Throw any bias you have out the window and do not make your decisions based on your political party lines or the party lines of others.
- Base your recommendations on the facts that surround forestry in New Brunswick, not the fiction and not the media.
- If there were an opportunity to help any other business in New Brunswick by improving what was already being done, no side effects, we would welcome the opportunity with open arms. Treat this no differently.
- Don't lose focus, the Jaakko Poyry Report is just one tool to use moving forward. It is not industry's proposal for a new forest policy in New Brunswick.

This is a step in the right direction and if it was the Jaakko Poyry Report that has brought this about, then it has already served as a useful tool. Let's follow that lead, get on the bus and head for the destination we are all looking forward to. An abundant resource has historically meant abundant wealth and we have a renewable resource to work with, how perfect is that. New Brunswick is large enough to accomplish this and small enough to share the wealth.

That concludes this bus trip, thank you for your time, good luck with your mandate.

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