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Letters to the Editor  
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Examine other forestry options

As a citizen of New Brunswick, I have questions regarding the new strategy for Crown lands forest management. The question I wish to focus on, in this letter, are the financial costs associated with increasing timber harvests.

I am a working forestry professional with over 20 years of work experience in the forest industry. In order to sustain increases in timber harvests in New Brunswick, the growth and yield of wood will have to be increased. In order to sustain an increasing harvest of wood in New Brunswick public forests, we will have to increase the amount of tree plantations.

How much is this going to cost; and how can we possibly afford it? The most intensive form of forestry is removing natural forests, planting tree plantations, weeding them and then intensively thinning them. These are all very expensive investments. The costs associated with intensive forestry practices on public land are paid for by the public.

In a province that is basically bankrupt, can we continue to carry this cost? The traditional forest industry in Canada is no longer competitive. When it comes to mass producing low-value forest products, and selling them on the international market, we cannot compete with companies that are growing wood in tropical climates. In order for the traditional New Brunswick forest industry to remain profitable, in the short-term, it needs more wood at less cost.

It might appear that the simplest way to resolve this dilemma is to grow and harvest more wood on public land. Increasing the sustained supply of timber on public land will require us to pay for intensive forestry practices decades into the future. This is not the only possible approach to forestry. We need to begin to examine, and experiment with, new business models for forestry in New Brunswick.

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