

Submission to the Select Committee on Wood Supply

Meduxnekeag Energy, Conservation and Development Committee

Mr. Chairman:

I should like to begin by relating the notion of New Brunswick regionalism to forestry policy.

New Brunswick is a remarkably regional province in which each region has its own distinct social and cultural character, often determined by the circumstances of original settlement but also by the lay of the land.

Let me give three examples out of many: the Kingston peninsula was settled by people who had all come to New Brunswick together on the good ship <sup>3</sup>Union<sup>2</sup> as a kind of extended family. Madawaska, far from all capitals, once considered declaring itself an independent republic at a time when some of its elders would have remembered the Republic of Vermont. The fertile and easily accessible lowland region along the St. John River between Fredericton and Grand Lake was formerly so coveted that it came under attack at least three times in its early history. Regions were often quite isolated from each other in former times and in some ways still are. Even before counties were established they began developing <sup>3</sup>shiretowns<sup>2</sup> in appropriate locations.

It is only natural therefore that these bioregions which are also social regions should feel that they require a degree of self-determination in a number of areas of public concern. This now includes their forests which were traditionally an important part of their life support system.

The dissolution of the County Councils has led to a disastrous loss of local empowerment which has come back to haunt us today in the resistance to centralized decision making concerning regional affairs which we are experiencing at this moment in the form of two petitions: one opposing the proposed Belledune waste incinerator on the North Shore and the other opposing the proposal for centralized hospital services in the upper agricultural zone of the St. John River Valley.

The establishment of the Minister's Round Table on Local Governance which held hearings in 2001 was an acknowledgement on the part of government that greater regional self-determination had become imperative. And of course, as we know, there are already a number of areas of regional jurisdiction in New Brunswick. They include the Service Districts, Solid Waste Commissions, Hospital regions, School Districts (albeit not as many as formerly) and Provincial Ridings. (The boundaries of Federal Ridings, on the other hand, are not always meaningful in terms of geography and culture.)

All the other provinces have forms of regional governance (empowered counties, townships, rural municipalities, municipal districts etc. as the case may be).

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The objections to regional empowerment in New Brunswick are mere misunderstandings which such practices as tax shifting, as already practiced in the city of Winnipeg, could solve. The need for regional empowerment in New Brunswick is overwhelming and new regional boundaries would probably have to be defined to correspond to the various new prerogatives that residents desire for their regions.

In determining such new boundaries the bioregional solution essentially means letting nature decide (geology, biota, watersheds etc.). But there is also the social aspect as we have seen. One very apt suggestion consists of using the readership zone of local newspapers (often weeklies) because they define the area within which people are really interacting.

We are all "dwellers in the land" to use Kirkpatrick Sale's title of his well known book (SierraClub Books). Chief Seattle had already said long before: <sup>3</sup>the land does not belong to us, we belong to the land.<sup>2</sup> We all live in a particular habitat and when you live in the forest you are living on an equal footing

with the animals. Like them we then think of the forest as our home and consequently view local issues from a quite different perspective from that of a government department, a much more caring perspective, as environmental inspectors are the first to admit. Hence the need for sustainable development is much more likely to be felt on a local than on a provincial scale. When it comes to forests, our home, it is always in the forest dwellers' interest to promote sustainability.

Can we really tolerate foreign invaders tearing down the walls of our home?

Is it to our interest to accept risks or costs or health hazards for the benefit of somebody else? That could only be called colonization. Forest dwellers cannot accept the degradation of their forest by unsustainable logging practices such as clearcutting because the forest is their life support base needed by them to foster their own well being in both the present and the long term future. They know that local control is the way to maintain healthy, well balanced, diversified and sustainable forests.

That is why I support the recommendations of the publication entitled "Managing Seven Generations on Crown Land," recently published in New Brunswick by the Falls Brook Centre. This publication outlines explicitly a number of regional forestry management options, all of which seem to me to be viable. I would like to underline in particular the example that is given of local control of Crown Land forest already implemented by the city of Revelstoke, B C, as being extremely relevant to the existing proposal in south-western New Brunswick centered at McAdam. There have been many benefits: employment has increased, the city of Revelstoke receives dividends and the forest is protected as a forest, not a plantation.

The McAdam proposal, made after a trans-national corporation, Georgia Pacific, gave up its licence to log on Crown Lands over a large part of southwestern

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New Brunswick, must now again be given the consideration it deserves in view of rapid implementation.

I also have been given to understand that there are a number of other requests for community silvicultural projects in New Brunswick, particularly at St. Martin's, on the Miramichi, at Kedgwick and on the Acadian Peninsula.

The publication also highlights the potential for First Nations tenure, especially as it has evolved in Northern Ontario. (I might add that similar plans are being discussed for the even more rugged areas of the Precambrian Shield in Northern Saskatchewan.) This option is open to New Brunswick as a result of the Bernard decision.

However the basic principle on which this new vision is founded is a realization that the time has come to put an end to New Brunswick's long history as an economic colony. That history has indeed been so long that it is no longer the former colonizers who are at the door but interests from all over the world. It seems to be assumed that New Brunswick is ripe for the picking because it is so full of meek, acquiescent and gullible people who are not likely to take a stand up for their own regional autonomy.

New Brunswick must now demonstrate with pride that it has the courage of its convictions by firmly rejecting the Jaako-Poyry Report because it is proposing the occupation of our land by trans-national licensees who would legitimize this occupation on their own terms for the foreseeable future. We must reject the report without any reservations.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison Connell

Meduxnekeag Energy, Conservation and Development Committee