

November 2003

To the Legislative Select Committee on Wood Supply:

Thank you for this opportunity to express my point of view on the future of our province's crown lands.

We frequently hear that New Brunswick's crown lands are held in trust for the people of the province and that they are, supposedly, managed to benefit all of us. But industrialized management of our forests has systematically degraded our forests into little more than pulpyards and 2 by 4 factories. Clearcutting, premature harvesting and forest simplification are profitable for the companies that now control the crown lands, but these practices are devaluing our forests and foreclosing their future. Industrial exploitation--it does not deserve to be called forestry--has impoverished and diminished what could and should be a productive and enduring legacy and endowment for New Brunswick's people.

Discussion of the Poyry report could provide us with an opportunity to regain control of the forests that are presently ours in name only. We need legislation to assure true public ownership and control of the crown lands to benefit all New Brunswickers in perpetuity. Instead of giving the licensees more power to complete the disaster they have created in our woodlands, the system of industrial licensing should be terminated as soon as possible. In its place an independent public commission should be charged with the responsibility of managing our provincial forests on behalf of and in the long term interest of New Brunswick's people. The first job of the commission should be to end overcutting and mandate selection harvesting with a view to restoring a diverse forest that can produce high value timber and offer the rich environmental, recreational and economic benefits that only natural forests can provide.

While some pulpwood will probably always be a part of the harvest mix in this province, crown lands should be managed to provide a much greater variety of products and other benefits than are currently being produced in the woods that theoretically belong to us. Hardwood stands should be preserved and restored instead of being converted to softwoods as the licensees have done. Much greater emphasis should be placed on marketing value-added products that can be produced in the woodland communities where timber is grown. High quality firewood production should also be encouraged, and scientifically engineered systems of wood-fired space and water heating should play an increased role in energy planning for New Brunswick. Wildland preserves, stream buffers and other conservation set-asides should be maintained and, where appropriate, extended to assure that wildlife populations and healthy forest ecosystems are protected.

The profits that the industrial licensees are seeking to increase and extract from our crown lands over the next several decades should instead be invested to restore and enrich natural forest ecosystems that can provide long term benefits to the people of New Brunswick if they are protected now. As our forests are restored and are able to produce higher value harvests, the provincial crown lands commission should direct the financial

benefits that will result the people of our province. These benefits should be extended to New Brunswickers in the form of secure jobs working in the woods, expanded opportunities to establish or work for wood product manufacturers/recreational outfitters, and targeted tax relief.

In this province we have the expertise and know-how to restore New Brunswick's crown lands, protect them from shortsighted industrial simplification and overcutting, and distribute their benefits fairly to all the people of the province. Rather than giving even more power, as the Poyry report suggests, to the special interests that have depleted and degraded our forest lands, we can take this opportunity to return control of our forests to the people of the province and establish good stewardship of the crown lands for future generations of New Brunswickers.

The outrageous demands set forth in the Poyry report should be a wake-up call. The system of industrial licenses that threatens the future of our forests should be abolished, and the care and control of our crown lands should be returned to their rightful owners, the people of New Brunswick.

Respectfully submitted,

Larry Lack
St. Andrews