

Presentation on Jan. 20, 1999, by **Roberta Clowater**

The New Brunswick Protected Natural Areas Coalition supports the protected areas strategy report you and your team have produced. The 12 areas you have identified are the best opportunities we have to protect large natural areas that are relatively roadless and relatively undisturbed in our province.

From an ecological perspective, protecting all 12 areas would bring some balance to the way we use our lands. Currently, we have 1.4% of the province in permanently protected areas, the lowest in Canada. All 12 areas identified in your report would add another 4.3%, giving us a bit more assurance that wildlife species will not be lost from our province, and we will not experience irretrievable loss of the ecological processes that support all life in New Brunswick, including our own. Since scientists and foresters don't have a clear idea of how industrial and other human activities are affecting our ecosystems, and the wildlife within them, we need these protected areas as a safety net.

We believe that interim protection needs to be given to these areas immediately. It is obviously going to be a while before government makes any final decisions about these areas. Interim protection would allow these areas to remain in their current natural state until legislation giving them permanent protection is passed.

It is extremely important for the government needs to perform a number of analyses on the potential socio-economic impacts that protection of these areas could have on our communities and the provinces as a whole. At the present time, our organization has hired consultants to provide reports in three areas related to the protected areas report, including a wood supply analysis, to help us determine what the actual costs may be if these areas are protected, an evaluation of potential impacts on forest employment, and potential economic benefits to communities, which has not really been addressed yet. The preliminary results of our studies show there are ways to use forest management planning models to maintain current wood supply to mills and have protected areas at the same time.

The industry has estimated that 800 jobs will be lost as a result of these protected areas. On the basis of our studies, we feel that this number is an over-estimate. In fact, we expect job loss in the forest industry to be minimal, if any. There are many ways, while designing protected areas and determining where the boundaries are going to be, to minimize impacts on the forest industry, and industries as a whole, and at the same time provide the kind of ecological benefits we need.

We need to move beyond the rhetoric of outdate "jobs vs. nature" debate, and work together on a "jobs AND nature" plan, which will provide the best benefit, ecologically, economically and socially to current and future New Brunswickers. Our organization wants to work with industry, government and other groups to create such a plan.

In closing, I would like to thank Dr. LaPierre for the time he and his working group have already spent on the document. I think it is unfortunate that some of the backlash is going to fall on your shoulders as you take this strategy report around the province. I hope that everybody will understand that this is a proposal for discussion and there is a lot of work yet to be done before we decide where these areas are going to be, how many there will be, and what their boundaries may look like. We all, as New Brunswickers, want what is best for our province and the best way to get there is by working together on this project.

Thank you.