

Presentation by Steve Reid

Presentation on Jan. 25, 1999

Good evening, Dr. LaPierre. My name is Steve Reid, and I am a member of the New Brunswick Protected Natural Areas Coalition. Like most everyone else here, I was born and raised here in New Brunswick and I care about what happens to our beautiful province. That is why I am here tonight to speak about why all of the areas you have proposed should be protected.

Having been at the first two public meetings, I was disappointed to see the amount of negative comments you received from the people present in those rooms. The fear and anger in those voices, however, is not indicative of how the entire population of our province feels. I hope that once everybody hears the message you are bringing and understands what it means, perhaps the fear and anger will disappear.

I think it is really important for everyone to have their say in this process. But, since time is limited, not everyone will be heard from. Therefore, I would like to read a portion of a press statement released on January 20 of this year.

"A new research poll shows that an overwhelming 93% of New Brunswickers surveyed believe it is important for the provincial government to protect much of the province's remaining wildlands ... The poll was conducted in November 1998 by Corporate Research Associates of Halifax ... The results show staggering support for protecting the province's wilderness and natural areas. Of the rural and urban people surveyed, 93 percent believe this is an important priority for the provincial government."

Other questions in the survey reveal the following facts:

When asked if the protection of wilderness and natural areas would promote local economic growth, 94% said it would.

When asked if protecting 10% of the province was too much, 86% of those surveyed said, "no, it is not too much." (It is important to remind us all that the 12 areas in this report combined equals only

around 5%.)

Dr. LaPierre, I think that the numbers of New Brunswickers who support the protection of natural areas is simply too large for the government to ignore.

At the same time, the fear that workers may lose their jobs is also not to be ignored. This debate is very relevant here, as Armstrong Lake, the Kennedy Lakes, and the New Brunswick Central Highlands are all near. They are really the only areas left of any size in this part of the province that are not totally fragmented or covered by roads. These areas, along with the other nine you have identified, would serve to protect the ecosystems within them and help preserve New Brunswick's quality of life.

The New Brunswick Protected Natural Areas Coalition is currently doing an analysis to find out what the possible impact of these areas could be on industry and jobs. The initial results suggest it would be considerably less than the 800 estimated jobs lost, a number we have heard frequently. We want to work with industry in this region, with government (both provincial and municipal) and with other groups to find a good solution for New Brunswick, so we can protect large natural areas AND maintain jobs at the same time.

I think that, working together, we can do this, to everybody's satisfaction.

We have to do this.

The people of New Brunswick want it.

Thank you.