

Industry proposal is on the wrong track

Much of the wood cut in New Brunswick ends up in products that are shipped to the United States. Right now, big wood and paper buyers in the U.S. like Home Depot, Business Depot, IKEA and others are asking their suppliers to prove they are taking an ecologically sustainable approach to forestry. These big buyers are sending their business to forestry companies that have had their operations certified under the auspices of the internationally recognized Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) system.

By moving to a system that is less about protecting the whole forest and more about just cutting wood at any cost, New Brunswick runs a huge risk of cutting itself off from important U.S. markets. In Ontario, Tembec Inc. recently had its operations in the 2 million hectare Gordon Cosens Forest FSC certified (including setting aside approximately 14% or 290,000 hectares of the area in protected areas) because it believes this will be good for business and will enhance its reputation with buyers on both sides of the border.

Being competitive in today's global markets is key to New Brunswick's future prosperity. To ensure this New Brunswickers will have to be smart competitors who maximize natural advantages, like healthy diverse forests, a skilled workforce, and appropriate-scale development if we want to remain in the race. Status-quo forest certification systems, including industry "self-certification," are not going to cut it in today's highly competitive international markets and New Brunswick should accept only the gold standard - FSC certification - for forestry on public lands.