

Presentation to Dr. Louis LaPierre on the Protected Areas Strategy

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I would like to begin my presentation with a couple of stories. The first is the ecological history of Easter Island. Easter Island is in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It is over 2000 miles from Chile and over 2000 miles, in the opposite direction, from the islands of Polynesia. In about 400 AD two large canoes set out from Polynesia. They contained agricultural supplies, including chickens, and about 50 people. You can imagine their joy when they landed on the shores of Easter Island. They had come to a new home, forested with palm trees and home to about 30 other species. By most measures this is a limited , but still very much a functioning eco-system.

The Easter Islanders cleared forests for farm land. But, as time progressed, the real measure of wealth of a clan become their huge rock statues or moai. The production and movement of moai took trees. And the clans furiously made more and more moai. To make a long story short, eventually Easter Island was deforested to the point in which most of the other species became extinct. The last of the palm trees was cut down in the 1800's. Without forests, the water resources on the island deteriorated to the point of being "muddy, but drinkable", and the capacity of the land to support agriculture diminished as well. To top it all off, there were no more trees large enough to build boats to get off the island. What did the Islanders do, now that they found themselves in this dilemma? What would you do? Well, the clans went to war against each other, and, they ate each other. After all, they had to eat something.

The second story is much closer to home. It is the story of what was once the worlds' most productive fishery. It is a story of people who lived on an island of rock and took their sustenance from the sea, one fish at a time. It is the story of how those people were displaced by freezer trawlers that scraped the ocean floor, took everything, and left a path of destruction in its wake. It's a story that everyone in this room knows well. It is a story of greed.

Some of you may think that greed is the driving force behind all human endeavor. Some of you may think that we can't do anything about it. I don't agree. I believe that, as humans, we have the capacity to think. I also believe that we can join together and find common solutions. I believe

that we can look greed in the face, name it, and then move on and develop policies and actions that work well for everyone.

The fact is that most people in this room agree with me. They know that we can not continue to clearcut and intensively harvest all of the forest. The forest is the basic habitat for most land species. It provides us with air and with water. If we think the Newfoundlanders were foolish to fish out the cod, just think how foolish we are. The cod, after all, is a single species. The forest is the habitat for all. It would be like the Newfoundlanders taking all the water out of the ocean.

The polls show that most people agree with me. 93% of New Brunswickers want the government to protect our wildland. 86% want the government to protect at least 10%. Currently we are protecting only 1.4% of our land. This is the lowest in Canada. All 12 regions in this report represent only 4.3% of the land base, so, if we protect them all, we will be protecting only 5.7% of the land base. Of that 5.7%, only 3.5% of it is productive forest. The remainder is swamp, bogs and steep, inaccessible places. So, in reality, we are discussing 3.5% of our forests. And the reason these particular forests are still wild is because they are the furthest from roads, surrounded by marsh, the worst areas for cutting and generally, the last choice of the companies. Now, I don't think there is anyone in this room who thinks that we should cut the last 3.5% of our forests. It simply does not make sense. Science shows that we need to protect land in order to ensure that species are not going extinct. And we need this land base in sizes that are big enough so that species that require a big range have a big enough population to successfully reproduce and maintain genetic diversity. Industry has been claiming that we already have 20% protected. What they are talking about is the buffers along streams, deer wintering areas and mature coniferous habitat. These areas are not permanently protected. They can still be cut. And, these types of areas just don't make the grade when we are talking about protecting biodiversity. What is protecting biodiversity? It is protecting life on this planet.

So, if most New Brunswickers think that we need to protect our wildlands, then why are we witnessing this massive outcry opposing this strategy. There is one answer - greed. The pulp and paper industry wants that last 3.5% and they are stopping at nothing to get it. They know that Canada has international commitments to protect biodiversity. They know that New Brunswick has commitments to Canada and the other provinces to protect our wildlands. Yet, instead of working together to develop the best strategy,

they have created fear and mistrust where there was co-operation. They have polarized the issue and are turning people against each other. I say to all of them "shame".

They came to the Fish and Game Association in Sussex and told them that hunting and fishing may be restricted. What does the report really say? It says that traditional hunting and fishing may be permitted with guidelines established for some individual areas. Sounds reasonable to me? But one does wonder why it doesn't say "should be permitted." During meetings about protected areas that were held a year ago, David Oxley, on behalf of the Irvings, was quite vocal on this issue. He was demanding that there be no hunting and fishing in protected areas. I saw the Irving strategy then, as I see it now. Irving wanted the report to say no hunting and fishing so that lots of people would get angry. Well the report didn't say that, so industry decided to be misleading and promote that viewpoint anyway. Industry has said that farming could be restricted, that people may not be able to use their camps, that private property may be expropriated and so on. And did people get angry? Yes. And have people been victims of a deliberate propaganda campaign? Yes.

The reality is simple. This strategy is about protecting large pieces of our wildland from industrial development, from being cut, from being mined, from having megaprojects and roads built. Activities like hunting, fishing, and snowmobiling just don't have that level of impact. There will be some areas in which there are endangered species that might need protection from these activities, but that is just common sense. The truth about this strategy is that, without the industry propaganda campaign, most people would support it.

The fact is that protected areas are good for people who want to fish and hunt. They can rest assured that species are not going extinct. Protected areas are good for people who have camps. They can rest assured that tomorrow their camp will not be in the middle of a clear cut. Protected areas are good for people who have private land in the identified areas. Their property value will increase with the assurance that the Crown Land around them is protected. Protected areas are good for jobs.

The biggest threat that industry has used is about job loss. This is a false argument. We all know the truth here as well. The jobs in the forests have been lost because of mechanization. One large harvester can take 40 jobs. This mechanization occurred for only one reason, to increase

corporate profits. Greed. The Crown Lands should be used to put people to work and companies should not be allowed to lease it unless they are guaranteeing increases in the number of jobs. Again, industry has used fear and intimidation, this time against their own employees. They have held meetings wherein their workers have to sign postcards to the Minister opposing the strategy. The employees are supposed to drop the postcards in a box as they leave the meeting. Their behavior is monitored. People who support this strategy and are scheduled to speak at these meetings and who have family in the industry get visited by the company, letting them know the score. I have heard from countless people in both industry and government who are afraid to speak up.

What does the report really say about the economy? The report says economic results from BC show that there is a higher rate of economic benefit from protected areas than from using the same land for forestry. Unfortunately, Dr. LaPierre's report does not have an economic analysis or a wood supply analysis. Industry has jumped into this gap by making up its own figures. Impossible for the rest of us to prove or disprove. One thing that we all know is that once that last 3.5% is cut, the jobs will be gone anyway. If we really want those jobs, we need to change our forest practices so that we maintain the forest and get the maximum value out of each tree cut.

Well, what do I want. I want all 12 areas to be protected from industrial development and roadbuilding. I want them to be large, at least 25,000 ha. I want the Caledonia Gorge site to be increased in size. I want the Christmas Mountains, which have areas that have never been harvested, to be protected. I want these sites offered interim protection immediately while the details get worked out. I want additional specific small sites that have special value protected. I want all the Crown land to be managed in an ecological way. I want all the people in New Brunswick to have jobs and access to our resources. I want to stop the flow of the wealth of our resources to big companies, most of whom are owned in the US.

In the end, we all live in New Brunswick, so we all know the score. We all know who has called the shots up until this point. When the guys working in the woods up north were burning harvesters to protest mechanization, industry isolated them. When the wood lot owners objected to unfair legislation, industry turned others against them. When the Native people called for access to Crown Land, and rightly so, again it was divide and conquer. I call on all of us to stop buying into the industry arguments and

propaganda. To stand together and say to industry that your greed is destroying everything. We can decide to stick together. We can decide to change things. We don't have to go the way of the Easter Islanders.