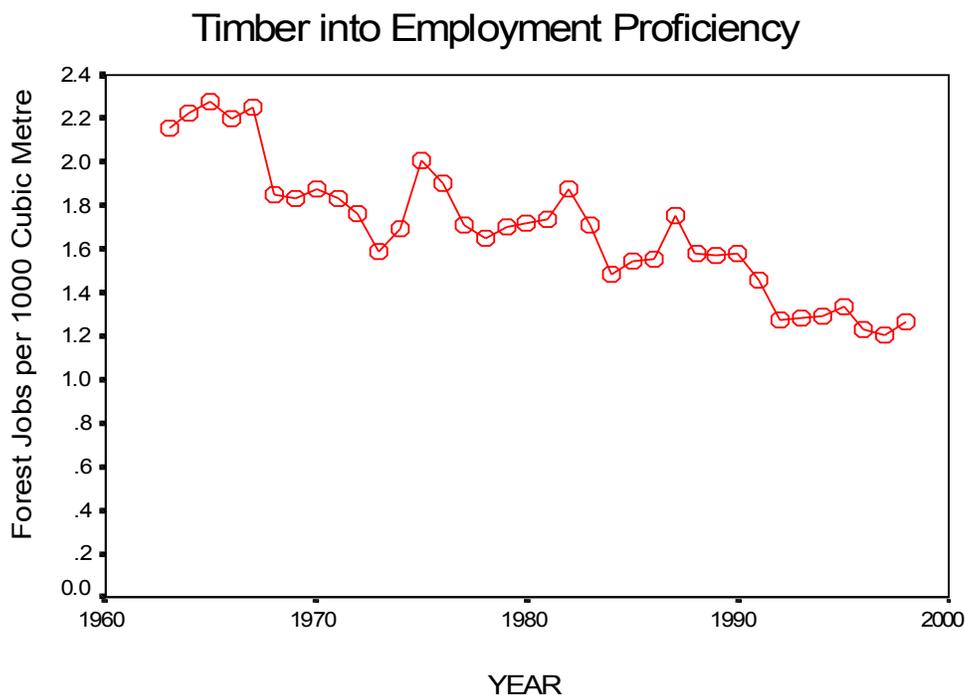


Is New Brunswick's New Forest Strategy Working in the Interests of New Brunswick Labour?

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New Brunswick's new forest strategy will ultimately be judged by its effectiveness in sustaining jobs and the environment. Most other facets of the strategy's impact will soon be forgotten, for example profits, royalties and taxes. New Brunswick Labour has a strategic interest and role in moving New Brunswick to a more enlightened utilization of its forest resource.

One measure of our intelligent use of our timber resource is the "proficiency" with which we convert timber into jobs. From 1960 to 2000, proficiency declined from 2.3 jobs/1000 cubic metres to 1.3 jobs/1000 cubic metres, a decline of 43%¹. This is not a matter of nostalgia for days of chainsaws and peaveys in the woods. It is a matter of how we utilize the wood we harvest.



New Brunswick lags Canada and the rest of the world in the proficiency of converting timber into employment. The United States, at 2.6 jobs per 1000 cu.m., generates over twice as much employment per available unit of roundwood as New Brunswick. New Zealand generates 1.8 jobs per 1000 cu.m., and Sweden, 2.0 jobs per 1000 cu.m.² To put this into perspective, given New Brunswick's Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) of 5 million cu.m., New Zealand would generate 2500 more jobs from the same amount of wood, Sweden 3000, and the U.S. 6500.

The currently proposed forest strategy projects to create 500 additional jobs from 660,000 cu.m. of additional AAC. This is a proficiency of 0.8 jobs per 1000 cu.m. We are clearly headed in the wrong direction. Each decrease in proficiency puts greater and greater pressure on our environment and ecosystem values. In addition, recent reports have encouraged the exploitation of biomass for energy and biochemicals³. These same reports reveal that such industries generate less than 0.1 jobs per 1000cu.m. Clearly such industries may be good for profit but are counter to the interests of Labour.

So, the big question is how to move the NB forest industry into a more intelligent use of this valuable resource while sustaining and growing the number of jobs within an ecologically sound management strategy. To replace an economic engine as massive as pulp and paper is a monumental task that requires nothing short of a wartime like effort.

So, where do we start? We already know that

- secondary wood manufacture and processing are keys to more proficient utilization of timber.
- the Acadian forest type supplies more timber compatible with secondary wood manufacture.
- plantations geared to pulp wood are counter to proficiency objectives.
- plantation wood does not meet FSC certification standards.
- Plantations converting the Acadian Forest type are not FSC certifiable.
- FSC certification is growing in economic importance.

The currently proposed forest strategy

- runs counter to enhancement of the Acadian forest type through establishment of more softwood plantations.
- encourages more softwood plantations that run counter to the evolving climate change.
- encourages more softwood plantations that will be economically challenged by lack of FSC Certification.

The question is how to promote the secondary wood manufacturing industry in today's climate of free trade where cheap imports trump domestic produced goods. Trade agreements preclude any subsidization of domestic manufacturing. The answer lies as much in the realm of cultural buying habits as it does the forest strategy itself.

The hints are there that such a revolution, of thought and habits, is possible. The steadily growing "Buy Local" economy needs to be encouraged in wood products. Labour has a role in the promotion and consumption of locally manufactured wood products, and in the encouragement of provincial pride in New Brunswick designed and manufactured wood products.

But the very first step must be a solidified rejection of the currently proposed forest strategy in favour of the more balanced strategy encouraged by the 2004 Report of the Select Committee on Wood Supply⁴. Government has spent ten years attempting to get around the will of the people, while delaying the evolution of the forest economy. The current strategy not only delays further evolution of the forest industry, it also delivers a deadly blow to the survival of the very resource that holds the promise of fruitful change.

We appeal to labour to join us in opposing the Irving designed NB Forest Strategy.

1. Natural Resources Canada (NRCAN). (2003) Forest Statistics. NRCAN. Ottawa, Canada; 2. Travers, Ray. (2003). Getting more value - and more jobs from our forests. David Suzuki Foundation. Vancouver, Canada; 3. Roberts, D. and Woodbridge, P. 2008 Future Opportunities for the Forest Products Industry in New Brunswick Report of the Task Force on Investment Opportunities in the New Brunswick Forest Sector Submitted to: Business New Brunswick ; 4. The Final Report of, and contributions to, the NB Legislature Select Committee on Wood Supply (NBLSCWS) 2004. New Brunswick, Canada.