**An Open Letter to Premier Stephen McNeil**

Dear Premier McNeil,

Nova Scotia’s working forests are [severely depleted](https://www.thecoast.ca/halifax/clearcutting-our-losses/Content?oid=9896802). Currently a few mills are scrambling to harvest the last remaining stands of quality timber while the rest of our forest enterprises are reduced to cutting young and early successional stands for pulp and [biomass](http://nsforestnotes.ca/current-issues/biomass/). Our working forests are becoming vast tree farms where [biodiversity is dying](http://halifaxfieldnaturalists.ca/hfnWP/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/HFNdocNSDNR26Apr2017.pdf) and boreal species replace our Acadian forest.

We could be nurturing a new forest. A forest that is representative of the species dominant here for centuries and best suited to our soils and climate. Over time this Acadian forest could [restore bio-diversity](http://www.bondrup.com/uploads/6/7/6/5/6765532/1-30.pdf) to our landscape and revive our forest economy.

Only government can start this process. Only you can provide the leadership we need.

We urge you to:

1. Inspire Nova Scotians with a new vision of the forest. Set goals. Create a regime of forest management that will enhance biodiversity and realize the full potential of our timber and non-timber resources.
2. End the conflict of interest at DNR. Create a new department with pre-eminent responsibility for stewardship of our resources and assign to a separate commission the allocation and marketing of those resources deemed to be available.
3. Recognize that there are strong economic and scientific data that support a major change in policy. Ensure that biological sciences influence stewardship policy and that landscape level factors – not narrow stand-level considerations - drive harvest decisions.
4. End policies that exploit resources. Impose a moratorium on [clearcutting](http://nsforestnotes.ca/2017/01/23/whats-a-clearcut-and-whats-not-a-clearcut-in-nova-scotia/) and two-stage clearcutting on Crown lands. Stop treating Crown lands as reserves for private mills. End intensive forest management and ban the export of unprocessed wood and wood chips.
5. Introduce policies that reward stewardship and conservation. *Encourage* [*ecologically sensitive harvesting*](https://www.cif-ifc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/COFE-Abbas-and-Fulvio-2016_shared.pdf) *of forest resources with programmes that reward silviculture (in its broadest sense) and minimize the use of the larger and heavier harvesters.* Foster [non-timber forest products](http://www.merseytobeatic.ca/non-timber-forest-products.php). Such changes can reverse the decline of employment in our woods.
6. Strengthen the small private woodland sector. Enhance the role of woodlot owner organizations and recognize their potential for collective bargaining.
7. Introduce a strategy that will accord woodlot owners the economic benefits of [carbon off-sets](http://www.nswooa.ca/assets/Uploads/files/Landowners-Guide-to-Carbon-Offsets2016-lo-rez.pdf).
8. Recognize that [tourism](http://nsforestnotes.ca/2017/09/22/clearcutting-is-putting-tourism-at-risk-says-president-of-nova-scotia-tourism-industry-association/) based on our beautiful forested land and seascape brings employment to Nova Scotia’s rural areas.

These steps are feasible. They will not be accomplished easily. The reward will be a forest legacy rich in biodiversity and broad economic benefit.

Yours respectfully,

The Healthy Forest Coalition