**SUSTAINABLE USE OF CROWN LANDS AND THE COST OF CLEARCUTTING**

**ISSUE**

Nova Scotia provincial Crown Lands belong to all citizens of Nova Scotia. Currently they are being managed primarily for the forestry industry. As the independent Lahey Report on forestry puts it:

**Managing Crown Lands solely or primarily for forestry or without sufficient regard for other values, interests, and objectives is wrong.**

The time has arrived to manage these lands for the benefit for all Nova Scotians.

**BACKGROUND**

The province of Nova Scotia is unceded territory of the local Mi’kmaq peoples, and these lands are currently held privately (59%), federally (2.8%) and provincially (33.6%). The provincial share is held as Public Lands in trust for the citizens of Nova Scotia. It is critical that these lands be managed sustainably for the benefit of all citizens and for the benefit of future generations.

In its ***Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all*** the International Labour Organization maintains that sustainable development means that the needs of the present generation should be met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development has three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – which are interrelated, of equal importance and must be addressed together.”

It is time to think beyond the traditional exploitive uses of our forests.

Clearcutting and over-harvesting forests on provincially held Public Lands does not meet the three dimensions of sustainable development. Destructive forestry practices adversely affect the environment, exacerbating both the current climate crisis and the mass global extinction event through destroying habitat for many forest wildlife, plant, and fungal associates. Clearcutting drastically reduces both social and economic opportunities that these Public Lands could provide. Dwindling forests resources around the world will result in our remaining diverse woodlands holding much greater value for its citizens than ever before

In order to replace outdated management practices, it is vital that our community leaders understand how any practice that impinges on sustainable use undermines a healthy society and local economy. It is also vital that they understand alternative opportunities and benefits. Switching current forestry practices to ecological forestry alone can result in an increased workforce in our woodlands (with reduced use of large machines vs. more on-the- ground workers). Utilizing the remaining intact forest for other economic benefits (e.g. maple syrup production, wild medicines) recreation (e.g. trekking, skiing, forest bathing), and social (e.g. school education) enterprises results in a healthier, more balanced society. Focusing timber use on value added products ranging from kitchen counters, moulding, furniture, flooring and higher-value building products will increase the return of wood value per unit harvested to local workers and communities.

***“A shift to sustainable forest management could nearly double the number of people currently employed, on half the volume of wood”***. The Nova Scotia Genuine Progress Index Forest Accounts, Volume 2 A Way Forward: Case Studies of Sustainable Forestry, Linda Pannozzo, Minga O’Brien, November 2001.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**We urge Government to give real force to the amendments to the purpose section of the Crown Lands Act passed April 8, 2021, by committing to the full and effective integration of these changes into immediate efforts to implement the Lahey Report.** These amendments, specifically Section 2(a), “provide the legislative and regulatory framework that will ensure Crown lands are sustainably used, protected and managed to maintain and enhance biodiversity and considers climate change and for purposes that include wilderness conservation, recreation, economic opportunity in forestry, tourism and other sectors, community development and for cultural, social and aesthetic enjoyment of Nova Scotians” and, additionally Section 2(c), “support the range of purposes set forth in clauses (a) and (b) through land-use planning for Crown lands”. These amendments must be applied in order to shift current practices toward the stewardship and sustainable use of Crown lands through consideration of economic, social, cultural and ecological criteria – the basic foundations of sustainability. Land-use planning on Crown lands must be coordinated and integrated with protected area planning to enable and achieve a coherent approach to the implementation of the three zones (i.e. protected areas, matrix lands and high-production forestry lands) of the Lahey-recommended triad model across Nova Scotia’s public lands. The Forests Act must also be revised to require the forestry industry to engage in ecological forestry on Crown lands where forestry activity is permitted in accordance with relevant Crown land use plans.

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