

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 Crown 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 Crown 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 Crown 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In order to replace outdated management practices, it is vital that our community leaders understand how any practice that impinges on sustainable use undermines a healthy society and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

All provincial political parties should support the proposed amendments to the Crown Lands Act (Bill 9: Crown Lands Act Amended, first reading 1 March 2021). The passage of this Bill will result in reflecting Crown Lands as public land for purposes that include a range of uses, rather than use as the forestry industry sees fit. This will shift current practices to the sustainable use of Crown Lands under economic, recreational and social criteria - the basic foundations of sustainability. The Forests Act should be revised to comply with these public land objectives and to require the forestry industry to engage in ecological forestry.

We call on all parties to support immediate implementation of the Lahey Report, thereby reducing forest clearcutting on the majority of Crown Lands. The first steps to implementing the Lahey Report are to update the Forest Act and the Crowns Land Act and to place a moratorium on all clearcutting until the Report is fully implemented.

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