

Jamie Simpson  
5548 Black St.  
Halifax, NS B3K 1P9

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Dear Members of the Law Amendments Committee:

***RE: Bill 136, The Green Economy Act and Amendments to EGSPA***

Thank you for the opportunity to recommend additional goals to the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*.

The Act covers a broad array of issues that impact our province's environmental and economic health. Wetlands, protected areas, reductions of harmful substances such as mercury, renewable energy – all are critical elements of our transition to a healthier society. However, sorely absent from the Act, and from the proposed amendments, are goals for more sensible forestry management policies.

Granted, the Act requires the completion of the new Natural Resources Strategy, and this has been done. This is an important step to better policy; it gets up past the centre line, but we've got quite a bit of ice to cover before we can celebrate a goal. You, Committee Members, are the team that can get this puck in the net.

Before I continue, let me take a moment to say a few words on my background. I'm a professional forester and a woodlot owner. I've written a book on sustainable forestry, now in its third printing, and I've worked as a logger. I've cut thousands of trees – make no mistake, I love forestry. I've also read nearly every study and report on forestry harvesting methods in eastern North America. I've discussed forestry with woodlot owners, forest product manufactures and contractors throughout Nova Scotia. I love rural Nova Scotia, I love our forest, and I am dedicated to forestry that increases the value of our forests and forest industries, while ensuring a healthy forest remains indefinitely. As a west-coast forester has said, "we do not sustain the forest; the forest sustains us".

As concluded in Nova Scotia's Natural Resources Strategy Review report, our current practices are not sustainable. These are heavy words. Consider what this means. There is no doubt that we are on a downward spiral here, my friends. Think, for a moment, what this means to rural Nova Scotia. Are you, Committee Members, ready to bear the weight of a failed forestry industry? If you do not see the writing on the wall, I suggest that you are blind to the reality of this situation.

Here's a quote from Peter Mallett, who worked as a professional logging contractor in New Hampshire:

*I moved to Nova Scotia from New Hampshire where I was a logging contractor. Almost all of my jobs were commercial thinning's and we left a good mix of uneven aged crop trees. I was proud of my work leaving the forest healthy and able to recut again in ten years or so.*

*When I moved here I was astounded by the horrible practices I saw here. I could not believe this type of clear-cutting was allowed totally devastating the forest leaving a barren landscape and ruining wildlife habitat with no good future for a healthy forest for a lifetime. It makes me sad.*

It should make us all sad. I have heard similar statements from harvesting contractors and woodlot owners from across Nova Scotia. Harvesting contractors are being forced out of business because we are running out of wood. Nova Scotia – a province of once-bountiful forests. And we are running out of wood.

Take the words of Mr. Vaughn Hodgson, who until recently had to shut down a harvesting business that had some 70 employees: “With my background, my opinion should count for something. We’ve overcut.... Last year, we were cutting 30-year-old softwood that should have been left for another 10 to 15 years.”

What about the supply of low-quality wood? Take the words of Tony Mee of Great Northern Timber, in the letter to the Utility and Review Board, 2010: “There is already insufficient low quality wood in the market place to meet the present demand. We process approximately 250,000 GMT of hardwood per annum. This has declined from a high of 420,000 GMT several years ago. The wood is presently fully utilised. There is no surplus capacity.”

These are anecdotal, but the trend is real. Who really knows what’s happening with our wood supply situation? Unfortunately, our Department of Natural Resources guards this information very closely. I haven’t seen the numbers. Have any of you seen the numbers? Do any of you know just how much wood supply we have in each of our three forest regions? Here are two simple questions: 1. What is the maximum annual wood supply we can possibly squeeze out the eastern region Crown lands? 2. How much wood has the government promised – guaranteed – to Stern (aka Pacific West Commercial Corp.)? We know the answer to the second question (400,000 cubic metres per year), but what about the first? What happens if the guaranteed supply isn’t there? I’ll tell you: taxpayers are going to pay for wood to be trucked from wherever it can be found all the way to Cape Breton. We’ve run out of supply in the central region, so it’s going to be trucked all the way from western NS on the taxpayer’s dime. Shameful.

As I mentioned, I have read pretty much every report or study comparing forestry harvesting methods in eastern North America. I co-authored a summary of all of these studies, and I’ll leave a copy with you. The salient message from these harvesting studies is that we are shooting ourselves in the foot with our current cutting methods. We are flushing our forests down the toilet, along with all the ecological and economic wealth they provide. We have the potential to grow far more fibre (150%), of higher value (multiple times more), while maintaining a healthy forest, if we transition towards professionally designed partial harvesting systems. It’s being done elsewhere. It’s entirely possible. We just need the leadership to encourage the transition here.

So, how can you help?

**#1. Change the Wildlife Habitats and Watercourses Protection Regulations, under the Forests Act, to stop whole-tree harvesting by the end of 2012. There is no justification for the continued destruction of our forest productivity and decimation of our biodiversity by this atrocious practice. Government promised to stop this practice over 2 years ago. The promise was passed through Cabinet. Let's make it across the goal line, folks, and get this one done.**

**#2. Get real with the clearcutting definition. The current one is an embarrassment to our province. It has no basis in forestry science. Revise the current definition by the end of 2012 – adopt the one presented to government by the consortium of environmental and woodlot owner groups some two years ago, which was soundly ignored by government.**

**#3. Over 90% of all government spending on silviculture supports the clearcutting of our forests. Shift this to less than 50% of funding by the end of 2013.**

**#4. Split the Department of Natural Resources' responsibilities: give wildlife and habitat protection to the Department of Environment, and give industry promotion to whoever in government is responsible for economic development. Just get it out of DNR – the conflict of interest this causes within DNR has been disastrous.**

My thanks for your time and attention, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Best regards,

Jamie Simpson, Register Professional Forest, M.Sc.F., J.D. candidate