

Plenty wrong with new forest plan

By Don McCrea, Letters, Telegraph-Journal, May 10, 2014

What is bad about the latest forest deal?

It is a continuation of a direct loss of millions of dollars on our seven million acres of Crown land.

It doesn't provide any value added for our forests. It provides additional fibre to one main player to be chipped into pulpwood at 25 per cent of the royalty rate that existed in 1990.

It is a continuation of low product prices for private woodlot owners who cannot compete with the giveaway prices our government charges on our Crown forest.

It further removes the presence of our stewards of Crown land in the Department of Natural Resources who already are not allowed to leave the road in the harvest areas. This is a disgrace!

It extends the monopoly of the licensees to harvest Crown wood and now permits cutting in streamside reserves and deer yards.

It results in limited additional employment in New Brunswick.

There has been no consultation on this deal and it flies in the face of many studies done over the past 20 years recommending a much different approach.

It continues the practice of sole sourcing improvements on Crown land in lieu of tendering for roads, bridges and silvicultural work including planting and thinning. The latter is done on a fixed rate basis and if economies accrue, savings go to the industry and not the government.

This is an expected result when you have an inept government dealing with a company larger and more powerful than the government itself. First it was lower natural gas and a broken contract with Enbridge, then a reduction in property taxes and now more free wood from our public forest.

The good news is that this is just another fumble from a government on its last legs.

Don McCrea
Fredericton

Don McCrea held different government positions in the Departments of Natural Resources and Transportation over three decades.