

**Working Committee for the Integrated Management of
Madawaska – Restigouche Public Forests**

Toward Ecological and Economic Management of Public Forests

Paper submitted in response to the

**Report of the New Brunswick Task Force on Forest Diversity and
Wood Supply**

and the

**Report of the Task Force on Investment Opportunities in the New
Brunswick Forest Sector**

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Summary

Committee objectives

The Committee is pursuing three main objectives:

- Ensuring greater participation by community and private partners in managing public forests and strengthening consensus building
- Increasing the productivity of public forests for wood supply in accordance with the ecological objectives
- Optimizing the regional economic benefits of public forests, respecting sustainable development

Integrate ecological and economic objectives

The province's public forest management strategy must better integrate economic and ecological objectives based on solid scientific grounds. Priority must be given to the economic objectives of forests and ensuring that they follow clear and critical ecological objectives. The survival of half the province's communities directly depends on it. **One absolute rule must guide forestry operations: the harvesting of any tree species should not exceed its growth at any time.**

1. Ecological objectives

Three objectives must be prioritized in the new public forest management strategy:

- Greater attention paid to the protection of waterways through better maintenance of roads and encouragement of good forestry practices.
- Exploration of two innovative approaches that are likely to positively impact water quality and the health of terrestrial and aquatic fauna: green corridors along the waterways and planning forestry activities by watershed.
- Increase of the surface area of protected zones from 4% to 10% and maintaining 25% of the trees as an old-growth forest.

2. Economic objectives

The research–innovation culture and continuous questioning of forest management practices must be strengthened to increase the productivity of various species in accordance with the ecological objectives.

Opportunities for significantly increasing the productivity of public forests and wood supply exist. Specifically:

- **Optimizing the yields of softwood plantations.** Better productivity would reduce the pressure to increase the surface area of plantations and mixed-wood forests in particular.
- **Establishing softwood plantations on lands that are naturally dominated by these species.** Plantations should promote a mix of species that are adapted to the soil characteristics and climate change.
- **Paying closer attention to quality hardwood species.** It is important to improve knowledge and silvicultural practices. When appropriate, quality hardwood species should be favoured in mixed-wood forests.
- **Targeting the integration of the New Brunswick forestry industry with sawing activities,** which favours attaining the optimal value for the tree and the wood.

- **Integrating private woodlots** into the forestry industry chain. Owners must be supported to increase the productivity and profitability of woodlots.
- **Optimizing the regional economic benefits of public forests** in resource regions. With this in mind, the Committee opposes recommendation 6 in the Roberts Report.
- **Adopting a biomass policy.** It must give priority to securing the energy supply for existing businesses and grounding itself in solid ecological and economic foundations. Part of the biomass volume must be reserved to ensure the development and potential growth of new economic opportunities in the forest regions. NB Power should review its policy of alternative energies and exit fees for cogeneration activities.

The research–innovation culture and continuous questioning of forest management practices must be strengthened to increase the productivity of various species in accordance with the ecological objectives.

Erdle/Roberts Scenarios

The Committee rejects the extreme options and scenarios, which only integrate one objective, either ecological or economical. It favours a middle approach that integrates the two primary objectives.

Public forest management

The Committee recommends significantly strengthening the **transparency** and **accountability** of licence and sub-licence holders and the provincial government in managing public forests.

Building on its collaboration experience during the last year, the Committee recommends implementing an Integrated Public Forests Management Board, which would group the Madawaska and the Restigouche. More local mechanisms related to timber licences could remain in place to foster communication between the various users. An efficient approach promoting greater contribution from the population and participants must be adopted. The universities could contribute to support this process.

Roles of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

The DNR must **review several of its current standards and practices** to remove the barriers to and promote increasing the economical and ecological productivity of public forests. It must **commit itself to clear objectives to increasing the wood supply and productivity** of public forests. It must **reinforce the accountability of licence and sub-licence holders** to meet the economic and ecological objectives. It must aim to **become a first-class international organization with forestry jurisdiction that pursues research, productivity and innovation.**

Working Committee for the Integrated Management of Public Forests

List of Members

Government representatives

Hébert Arseneault, Mayor of Balmoral, Representative, Restigouche Mayors' Forum

Jacques Martin, Mayor of Edmundston, President, Forum des maires du Nord-ouest
[Northwest Mayors' Forum]

Jean-Paul Savoie, President, Association francophone des municipalités du N.-B.
[Francophone association of New Brunswick Municipalities]

Community economic stakeholders

Anne Hébert, Director General, Conseil économique du N.-B. [New Brunswick Economic
Council]

Carole Tremblay, President, Kedgwick Chamber of Commerce

Fernand Landry, President, Business Restigouche

Ecological group stakeholders

David Leblanc, Executive Director, Restigouche River Watershed Management Council

Roland Michaud, President, New Brunswick Wildlife Federation

Industry representatives

Mark Arseneault, Director General, New Brunswick Forest Products Association

Stéphane Laflamme, Manager, AV Groupe Atholville

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1. Background

The Working Committee on Integrated Public Forests Management is a product of the Groupe des partenaires du Restigouche [Restigouche partners' group], which was established following the closure of the Bowater factory and the uncertain future of Timber Licence 1. This Committee grouped municipal, environmental, union and economic community partners, as well as representatives of the forestry industry from among licence and sub-licence holders in this area. The Groupe des partenaires du Restigouche submitted a proposal to the provincial government recommending the transfer of the timber licence to AV Group and the implementation of an Integrated Management Committee for the public forests under this licence. The proposal for an Integrated Management Committee was not approved by the provincial government at this stage.

The Restigouche partners and the greater region of the North and North-West continued to take action following this decision. After two visits to forestry operations in this region and several meetings with licence and sub-licence holders, the decision was made to bring the stakeholders of this large territory together. This decision was based on the interdependency of forestry exploitation activities and community stakeholders.

We are pursuing three fundamental objectives:

- Ensuring greater participation by all community and private stakeholders in managing public forests and strengthening consensus building between all stakeholders;
- Increasing the productivity of public forests for wood supply in accordance with the ecological objectives; and
- Optimizing the regional and community economic benefits of public forests in terms of sustainable development.

The Committee benefited from the expertise of several resource people, particularly those from the Forestry Faculty at Université de Moncton and staff of environmental and business groups. The quality of the two reports (Erdle and Roberts) also significantly helped the Committee in its considerations.

2. The future of our communities and the forestry industry

The future of forest regions in New Brunswick and the communities living in them is integral to the future of the forestry industry. The forestry industry represents 8.7% of New Brunswick's GDP, to which we must add the recreational-tourist sector. Since 2000, the number of forestry-related jobs has fallen dramatically by almost 50%. The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers estimates that there are 300 communities in Canada that depend on forests, including 50 in New Brunswick alone, or nearly 50% of our municipalities!(APEC 2008, Building Competitiveness in Atlantic Canada's Forest industries : A Strategy for Future Prosperity, p. 16). Regions whose economies are based largely on this sector of activity are therefore highly vulnerable. Any consideration on the management of our forests requires an approach that recognizes and respects the situation and these communities.

Of course, we have received positive prognoses from the Task Force on Investment Opportunities in the New Brunswick Forest Sector and the information that we have received as part of our work convinces us that these prognoses confirm this statement.

Nonetheless, the major difficulties being experienced by the forestry industry and the recent wave of sawmill and factory closures in our regions challenge us not to take this industry for granted. We have to be increasingly more committed and vigilant in managing public forests by strengthening relationships and exchanges between municipalities, community groups of public forest users and private partners. Moreover, the importance of public forests both for communities and for the industry offers partnership opportunities in managing this important resource. We believe that we have both a responsibility and a right regarding the management of our public forests. The recommendation of an integrated management mechanism is part of this involvement.

We also recognize that our regions will continue to depend heavily on the forestry industry and its resources for their development and well-being. Despite our willingness to diversify our economic activities, we must recognize that this dependence will remain strong. The strategy for managing public forests (as for private forests) must recognize this reality. Moreover, there are opportunities to diversify and significantly increase productivity within the forestry industry itself.

From the outset, we would like to emphasize that we are concerned that neither report is directly interested in the correlation between managing public forests and developing resource regions. We declare loud and clear throughout this report that the management of public forests must aim to optimize the economic and community benefits of the resources and this industry in resource regions.

As both reports stated, the current management-by-constraint approach is not appropriate. We must guide ourselves clearly toward objectives-based management. We will attempt to adopt this approach in this report by proposing ecological and economic objectives to guide public forest management.

Moreover, it seems urgent to develop clear medium- and long-term visions of public forests. The very nature of forests implies that the consequences of the strategies and decisions made today will be felt for a long time to come. It is essential to build our future on solid bases that are as stable as possible. Aligning the province's interdepartmental policies, universities, community colleges and other stakeholders is key to the industry's survival. Some factors are beyond our control; however, provincial elements must be firmly guided toward a diverse, sustainable and globally-competitive forestry industry.

3. Our approach: Sustainable development and greater transparency

Our approach is firmly rooted in sustainable development. We want healthy, diverse forests, with increased and sustained productivity. We want quality waterways and healthy, sustained fish and fauna populations. We would also like to preserve unique sites and plants and those with important ecological value. We are aiming for the viability and development of communities that rely on forestry activities.

Given the economic importance of forests, we recognize that compromises must be made. For example, we are not looking to restore forests to their original state, or even to the reference year of 1940. **However, it is imperative that the exploitation levels of various commercial species remain sustainable, while integrating ecological objectives.**

The Erdle Report set out seven scenarios, in addition to the *status quo*, based on sustained yields for all commercial species in New Brunswick. The report also stated that a variety of combinations of indicators was possible.

However, the Erdle Report does not cover public forest productivity and more efficient measures of managing forests to meet socioeconomic and ecological objectives. We believe it is possible to create an approach that integrates both ecological and economic objectives. Our recommendations clearly lie in this direction.

We also insist on the need for a more significant mechanism for community and private partners participation and greater transparency in managing public forests. This type of mechanism, well supported and fed by the DNR and partners, would contribute significantly to increasing the accountability of public forest users as well as the department itself. It could also contribute to increasing the accountability of community and private stakeholders in managing public forests.

4. Sustainable development: Ecological and environmental objectives

4.1 Protect waterways and maintain fish stock health

Our observations and interactions have led us to confirm that the biggest challenge for the sustainable planning of public and private forests is the protection of waterways. Sports fishing is a significant economic and recreational activity for our communities. Every step must be taken to ensure the sustainability of this resource and this economic activity by increasing the protection of waterways.

Our findings:

- Climate change is generating “more frequent extreme storm events” (five times more frequent according to the 2007-2012 Climate Change Action Plan of New Brunswick), increasing the impact of forest harvesting and the forest road system on the water system, such as the Restigouche River and its tributaries.
- Observations of extreme seasonal flooding and increased sediment supply in the waterways.
- Forest roads built before the standards were improved continue to be major sources of sedimentation in waterways. Sedimentation in waterways is a significant threat for spawning and fish health in general.
- Stream identification for forestry planning is lacking in some sectors, causing risks of non-adherence of buffer zones for these habitats.

The conservation group members on our Committee, like our experts, found that the contamination of waterways as a result of forestry exploitation is primarily due to the roads. The forestry road construction standards were improved approximately a decade ago. However, significant challenges still remain. Maintenance of secondary forestry roads that are no longer being used must receive greater attention.

Our recommendations:

- Adopt measures to improve the roads that were built before the standards were improved and which are a significant source of sediment supply in waterways. The DNR must improve its standards for all forestry roads and increase surveillance.

- Given the importance of the riparian habitat for terrestrial and aquatic fauna, we recommend establishing part of the protected zone increase (see section 4.3) along waterways. Expanding the buffer zones (restricted harvesting) is also recommended, particularly for headwater rivers and small streams.
- Best management practices for riparian forest buffers and the application of pesticides along the waterways should be subject to assessment and a review of standards. The recommendation of establishing green corridors and expanding riparian forest buffers as a result of the increase in protected zones should also contribute to better protecting these sensitive areas.
- Explore an approach that would take watersheds into account in forestry planning to decrease the impacts on the water system. Calculation methods for this exist in other governments.
- Protection of the visual corridor along salmon and canoeing rivers is also important.

4.2 Diverse, healthy forests, and sustained harvest

A healthy forest is a productive forest that necessarily involves a diversity of quality species for economic purposes, which support healthy flora and fauna and sustained stocks and which preserves unique habitats and species and those with ecological value.

Over the past few decades, market demand for hardwood has strongly influenced the management of forests, including public ones. For example, the Pöyry Report focuses most of its attention and recommendations on this species group. For both ecological and economic reasons, it seems essential to establish a better balance in representing species. Regional and ecological differences in forest types should be taken into consideration when establishing authorized practices. It is also important to respect the soil's natural capacities.

The practice of converting hardwood-dominant land to softwood species is now forbidden, which all of the Committee's stakeholders support. However, the committee is deeply concerned about how little attention is paid to the health of high-quality mixed-wood forests or pure high-quality hardwood forests today. We will return to the economic objectives later in the chapter.

Concerns were also expressed about a significant reduction in certain species of conifers, such as cedar (thuya) and white pine. From our interactions, we learned that plantations now include a greater diversity of hardwood species. We also encourage silvicultural practices enabling improvements to the future of these species.

The Committee members support and even recommend the practice of plantations on softwood-dominant land. We noticed that the current practice of natural regeneration limits the productivity of softwood forests. We also observed silvicultural practices in plantations that contribute to increasing the viability of these spaces and their productivity for fauna, soil regeneration and wood production. According to the independent resource people on the Committee, the popular negative perception regarding habitat in plantations that are thinned are unfounded. However, we must ensure that the use of plantations mimics some kind of natural stimulation, such as encouraging a mix of softwood species. The predominant use of black spruce should be questioned given the unfavourable predictions regarding its survival in the context of climate change.

The health of forests and species also involves the presence of trees of different ages. We recommend adopting the conservation standard of maintaining at least 25% of the forest as old-growth forest. This result appears in all of the scenarios in the Erdle Report.

One absolute rule must guide forestry operations: the harvesting of any tree species should not exceed its forest possibility (growth) at any time.

4.3 Increase the surface area of protected zones

This recommendation appears in all of the scenarios proposed by the Erdle Report, except for the *status quo*. We subscribe to the recommendation of 10%. Sites where unique species reside and sites of significant ecological value should be targeted.

4.4 Healthy fauna

Stakeholders, particularly hunters, industry stakeholders and biologists, believe that the current approach to conservation zones for deer wintering is not effective. Keeping in mind an objectives-based management approach, we recommend working according to a desirable ecological objective regarding populations of various species, particularly deer (stags) and moose. The DNR already monitors these species' populations.

It is up to licence and sub-licence holders (supported by an advisory committee) to plan activities that are likely to meet the target objectives. The DNR will continue to rigorously monitor the populations and, if necessary, develop a strategy to resolve all decreases in herds that would exceed natural fluctuations.

We recommend exploring innovative approaches, such as the use of green corridors along waterways to create connections between habitats, promote the migration of fauna, and thereby contribute to herd health.

Community stakeholders in particular value fauna at ecological, social and recreational levels.

4.5 Status of conservation forests

The conservation forest essentially targets preserving sites of ecological interest, deer wintering areas and riparian forest buffers. The current approach involves not combining conservation objectives on one site, as it would require greater surface area. By modifying this approach, it would be possible to reduce the surface area of conservation forests while maintaining the ecological objectives in full. An approach that integrates ecological functions appears necessary. If we add the inefficiency of the approach regarding the areas reserved for deer wintering, there is no doubt that the current area of conservation forests is insufficient.

Increasing from 4% to 10% the surface area of protected zones where harvesting activity is banned and establishing a standard of keeping at least 25% of the forest as old-growth forest would be significant measures for conserving and preserving forest and fauna health. As previously recommended, solutions along the waterways should be explored, whether through riparian forest buffers or green corridors. We should anticipate minimal interventions aimed specifically at maintaining riparian forest buffer efficiency and habitat. It will be important to continue analyzing the impact of forest activities over the years.

5. Sustainable development: Economic objectives

It is clear that it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet the demand with the current supply of wood (APEC, Roberts). Roberts even notes an increasing shortfall in wood fibre (p. 4, 9, 26). The uncertainty of wood supply in NB contributes to weakening the sector. Moreover, the increased net volume of logs exported outside the province (p. 10) is a significant concern to our communities. The competition for access to forest resources is increasing and must be rigorously managed to offer the maximum sustainable economic benefits, particularly in the resource regions, without endangering other ecological functions and important recreational and tourist activities.

As previously mentioned, we share the positive prognoses of the Roberts Report. However, Roberts specifies that the forest sector's competitiveness in the international markets rests on "...the emergence of a new more robust and profitable forest sector." (p. 24) He also adds: "If the objective is to generate wealth, the Government of New Brunswick and the industry should consider strategies to expand – not reduce – Crown and private timberland wood supply through a combination of enhanced productivity, improved forest management regimes and commercial programs for private woodlot owners" (p. 6).

Committee members are convinced that it is possible to achieve this objective while respecting and even enhancing the ecological objectives. The keystone is greater productivity from public and private forests.

We also consider that the research-innovation culture in managing public and private forests must be reinforced. We must be open to questioning our practices and evaluating the most effective approaches, whether in forest productivity or in the integration of ecological and economic objectives.

5.1 Significantly increase the sustainable productivity of public forests and the wood supply

Our observations, exchanges and consultations lead us to conclude that it is possible to significantly increase the productivity of public forests in NB while respecting essential ecological objectives. Currently there are significant barriers to increasing the productivity of public forests. We specifically note:

- The general absence of productivity objectives for public forests and the low productivity of significant areas of public forests, increasing the pressure for wood supply and competition in the face of certain species;
- The absence of clear cutting standards that require effective re-establishment of productive forests;
- The absence of integrated ecological objectives, thus increasing areas of less-productive forests;
- The absence of clear policies that favour pure or mixed stands of quality hardwood species and
- The lack of knowledge, particularly concerning productivity of hardwoods.

It is essential to increase the forest potential for key species; that is, more wood must be produced on Crown Lands. If actively managed, Crown Lands could produce an additional 3.9 million cubic metres. This additional productivity could support a pulp mill, three sawmills and create 900 pulp mill and sawmill jobs, and 1,000 jobs in the forests.

Significant opportunities exist to increase the wood supply for the various forestry industry niches. As a first step, forest productivity must be increased using best practices management. This objective applies to plantations as well as to mixed and hardwood forests. An increase in thinning practices in plantations, as well as mixed and hardwood forests, would greatly contribute to achieving this objective. It would also improve the quality of the wildlife habitat. Moreover, it would reduce pressure to increase plantations.

It is also possible and acceptable to increase plantations of softwoods on lands naturally suited to these species. As mentioned previously, the current practice of natural regeneration after clear cutting is a very counter-productive standard. Clear cuttings are desirable in forests dominated by softwoods and should be systematically followed by plantation. The inclusion of different softwood species in the plantations, taking into consideration the soil characteristics, should be part of the standard.

In mixed forests that include quality hardwood species and in stands of pure hardwoods, silviculture treatments such as thinnings and selective cutting are required.

For a better integration of the ecological objectives, it is possible and desirable to increase the extent of the usable forest while respecting ecological objectives.

Overall, it is essential to determine the level of harvest and the long-term sustainable objectives in the ecological plan for all species and all commercial products. Achieving these objectives should be an on-going focus.

5.2 Increase the productivity of private woodlots

The Roberts Report points to the very low productivity of private woodlots (p. 10) The provincial government must institute programs and incentives aimed at private woodlot owners that favour investments in silviculture. Clearly the reduction of the envelope and percentages for silviculture in the last provincial budget must be reviewed.

There must be better integration of private woodlots in the forestry industry chain and ways to increase the productivity, profitability and revenues for the owners. Silviculture treatments other than clear cutting should also be encouraged and supported. It is important to review the recommendations of the reports of the Table de concertation sur l'aménagement durable les lots boisés du Nord-Ouest. [Table on sustainable management of woodlots in the Northwest] (www.umce.ca/foresterie/lots_boises/index.php).

5.3 Increase the supply of quality hardwoods

It is essential to increase the supply of quality hardwoods. Increasing the productivity (quantity and quality) of public and private forests is the primary source for increasing the supply. Therefore, it is essential that the DNR changes its criteria for granting financial aid to silviculture and includes silviculture in mixed and hardwood forests intended to increase these species. It is also important that a method to inventory the quality of hardwoods be integrated into other practices.

Our Committee recommends taking important steps to increase knowledge about the development of high-quality hardwoods as quickly as possible. A hardwoods research centre project at the Université de Moncton would be an important investment in this direction. In the meantime, the DNR should also designate a competent staff member who could work with the industry to support its practices in the management of hardwood forests. This person could

also work to better integrate the needs and characteristics of this niche into DNR policies and standards. There is also a need to review the criteria for authorizing the conversion of a mixed forest into a softwood forest in forests containing quality hardwood species.

5.4 *Develop the optimal economic value of the tree and its wood fibre*

The optimal value of the tree must constitute the basis for allocating rights to the public forests. The allocation of forest resources must target activities with the highest economic potential, diversification and development of new economic opportunities in forest regions. The government should explore a mechanism to facilitate access to wood supply from the public forest for new businesses / activities focussing on new high value added products or regional economic opportunities.

We also note the precaution of the Roberts Report as to certain products that appear attractive, such as wood pellets, or the conversion of biomass into electricity, regardless of other processing or forest transformation activities.

5.5 *Integrate the forestry industry chain – starting with the sawmilling industry*

We recognize the advantages that NB obtains from integrating its forestry industry starting with its sawmilling industry. Any allocation of forest resources related to public forests should be based on this positive feature.

5.6 *Optimize the economic benefits for the development of the regions*

We must first specify that we oppose recommendation no. 6 of the Roberts Report. This recommendation suggests that public forest wood be sold by submission to market prices. All the Committee members agree that this is not adapted to the New Brunswick context and could potentially be unfavourable to forest communities.

There are opportunities for optimizing the regional economic benefits of the public forests, whether it be by expanding processing and forest product transformation activities and recreational and tourist activities or through new forest products and sub-products. Whenever possible, the government, in consultation with its private partners, should give priority attention to this objective.

Opportunities also exist for both upstream and downstream activities. For example, tree nurseries could be located in the resource regions, rather than in an urban centre. In addition, post-secondary learning institutions offering forest-related programs in the region could be supported and strengthened to better support the industry.

We reiterate the proposal for a hardwood research centre affiliated with the Université de Moncton. Knowledge about the development of hardwoods is extremely lacking. The Centre of Excellence in Woodworking could also be utilized.

5.7 *A provincial policy on biomass*

There is great concern among the regional communities' stakeholders and businesses regarding the absence of a provincial policy on biomass. There is strong competition for access to this resource. It is important to adopt a policy based on solid scientific and economic fundamentals as soon as possible. Clear ecological and economic principles must be established. The biomass policy must be based on thorough analysis and must be included as an integral part of the public forest development plan.

5.7.1 Ecological principles

Sustainable management of biomass and accountability

A prudent approach is required in the allocation of the resource. Allocation of the biomass must be strictly based on the available resource (“fibre balance”). The creation of cogeneration infrastructures and other uses, transformation or conversion of biomass that exceed the available resource must be avoided. Such a situation would create cumulative pressure on the resource, which would have ecological and economic repercussions.

Licence and sub-licence holders should submit a specific report on biomass in the annual “**Timber Utilization Survey**” report.

Biomass limited to residues

Biomass for energy needs must be focused on residues. The direct use of tree trunks or logs of quality species or immature trees in energy production activities should be prohibited.

Soil characteristics

The collection of residues must take into consideration soil characteristics and restoration needs. An excessive collection of residues could result in soil degradation.

5.7.2 Economic principles

Priority: secure the energy supply for forest enterprises.

The biomass policy must give priority to securing the biomass supply for current cogeneration infrastructures or those that allow the forest industry to directly reduce its energy costs.

There are already concerns about significant challenges at this level. The policy must therefore aim primarily at reducing the costs and energy dependence of these businesses with the goal of allowing them to adjust to the new energy context.

The optimal value of the resource

Excess biomass, after securing the supply for cogeneration projects and enabling the forestry industry to directly reduce its energy costs, must respect the principle of optimal value of the resource.

New opportunities in the regions

As stated earlier, the development of the resource regions must be one of the priority objectives for the public forest management strategy. In this respect, part of the biomass volume must be reserved to ensure the development and potential growth of new economic opportunities in the forest regions.

Optimize biomass collection while respecting ecological principles

A strategy must be developed to optimize biomass collection, specifically in public forests, during thinning or tree-cutting operations. This applies also, for example, to the cutting of growth along the roads. In certain cases, independent entrepreneurs may be interested in this.

6. The Erdle / Roberts Reports

We maintain that in the context of NB, economic objectives must have priority in the management of public forests. We therefore reject scenarios “A” and “B” of the Erdle Report.

There are significant opportunities for increasing the wood supply by increasing the productivity of the public forests. The elimination of barriers to plantations on lands suited to conifers, except in mixed forests composed of quality hardwood species, the enhancement of provincial standards and accountability of businesses to public forests' yield objectives and the increase of productivity using silviculture in both softwood and hardwood forests could allow for very significant productivity gains. If we support the objective of increasing plantation areas, we think it is important to scientifically measure the impact of these increases over the years.

We believe that it is possible to reconcile ecological and economic objectives. A significant ecological threat from forest use, the sedimentation of waterways, is not related to the volume of the supply, but to the forest roads in particular and the division of cuttings in watershed areas. Steps are possible to achieve the other ecological objectives mentioned above.

As mentioned earlier, there is a strong opposition of recommendation 6 of the Roberts Report.

7. The Committee for the Integrated Management of Madawaska-Restigouche Public Forests

In keeping with a new vision of forest management for New Brunswick public lands and transparency in the integrated management of forest lands, and with a concern for integrating the representatives of various communities located within more than one timber licence area, and to create a certain critical mass able to influence the government, it is important to consider a mechanism that favours the attainment of these objectives.

Current consulting committees do not fulfill this mandate and the degree of satisfaction, although it varies from one timber licence to another, is generally less than satisfying. Their composition, functioning and lack of interest from the public and community groups are cited to justify this situation.

The Committee members agree that there is a need for greater public participation in the management of public forests. The community stakeholders recognize their responsibility to engage in a significant process and confirm their willingness to be more engaged. Nevertheless, a culture of transparency and accountability must be established by both the businesses and the Department of Natural Resources. Consultations with university-level expertise could greatly contribute to the credibility of the participation mechanisms.

Our Working Committee's experience has also led us to question the most relevant geographic approach. The interdependence of businesses and forestry activities in the three timber licence areas that affect our regions has convinced us of the interest in a larger geographic mechanism. A geographically larger Committee would naturally have a more strategic role than one linked to the management of a single licence area. Our Committee, to which several stakeholders could be added, would be a good example of such a strategic mechanism.

In addition, local stakeholders directly or indirectly affected by forestry activities in their neighbourhood need a mechanism for interacting with the licence holders. This need is equally legitimate.

An efficient approach must be considered that reinforces the participation in and transparency of public forest management and the accountability of licence holders, while avoiding increased red tape.

The regional or strategic Committee would be co-presided by a representative of the timber licence holder and a representative selected from among the non-industrial Committee members. This Committee would meet at least twice per year. The Committee would submit an annual report to the population with the progress status of objectives and issues of public interest. Decisions would normally be made by consensus.

8. Roles and responsibilities of the DNR

The Department of Natural Resources must revise several of its current standards and practices with the goal of removing certain barriers to and promoting the increase of the economic and ecological productivity of public forests. It must commit to achieving clear objectives of increasing the wood supply and the productivity of public forests and ensuring on-going surveillance of the achievement of economic and ecological objectives.

It must in particular:

- Establish standards and modify the current criteria so that all cutting areas are properly regenerated (based on the species initially sought) or replanted;
- Establish standards so that management plans incorporate high levels of productivity and ensure that these objectives are respected;
- Intensify surveillance efforts to enforce environmental standards, specifically water quality and the degree of sedimentation in the waterways caused by forest roads;
- Modify its approach as to what constitutes conservation forests (e.g. deer wintering areas) in favour of an objective approach. Monitor the levels of land and aquatic wildlife;
- Modify its management criteria for mixed forests to be more favourable to quality hardwoods and
- Modify its criteria for financial support for silviculture, not only for conifer plantations, but also for mixed and hardwood stands by promoting best silvicultural practices adapted to the land.

The DNR must recognize certification by independent agencies and review its role to eliminate duplications. The following independent certifications are currently available:

- Environmental Management Systems standard ISO 14001;
- CSA, FSC or SFI certification systems for operation and development of Crown Lands.

As stated in the recent APEC report (2008), NB is a worldwide leader in forest management certification, placing second behind Finland (APEC 2008, p. 34). Certification is based on environmental, social and economic values.

The DNR must focus its role in monitoring the achievement of ecological and economic objectives and support research in partnership with universities. It must seek to become a first-class international organization with forestry jurisdiction that pursues research, productivity and innovation in forestry.

To do this, it is clear that the provincial government must increase and ensure the predictability of its investments in public forests. The fluctuations that we have seen have a significant negative impact on the loss of skilled labour in our communities, the future wood supply of businesses, the potential loss of economic opportunities in our regions and the future of our communities in general.

It is equally legitimate and essential that the government ensure the profitability of its investments. Much more targeted and effective strategies are required.

9. Conclusion

A significant transformation is needed in public forests management. Indecision, lack of recognition of the economic value of the forestry industry for the forest regions, fluctuations in public investments, duplication and administrative red tape must give way to clear commitments.

It is entirely possible to reconcile ecological and economic objectives. Priority should be given to the economic objectives of forests and subject them to respecting clear and essential ecological objectives. The survival of half the province's communities directly depends on it.

The municipality, community and environmental stakeholders as well as the private sector, want to unite their efforts with the provincial government to significantly increase the contribution of public forests to the development of the regions and the well-being of the population. Public forests management must be more transparent and give greater importance to stakeholder participation in governing them. It needs to be based on solid scientific fundamentals and clear policies.

We want to highlight our appreciation for the opportunity that has been offered to us and that we want to fully seize, following the publication of the two reports. We hope for rapid and concrete results from this process. We now look forward to maintaining our commitment to the ecological and economic objectives set forth in this dissertation and to pursuing our work in this direction.