

What will the government do with the Lahey recommendations on forestry practices?

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With the release of the Independent Review of Forestry Practices in Nova Scotia by Lahey nicely critiques by Ray Ploudre (OPINION: Lahey forestry report: The good, the bad & the missing, in the Chronicle Herald, 8 September) the big question is how will the government respond? If the past response to previous reviews is an indication, then little will change except maybe how we define terms such as clearcutting.

The state of the forests in Nova Scotia and how we manage them is a function of economics. Our mindset is that we are still hewers of wood and drawers of water. As long as we treat our natural resources as endless commodities to be extracted and sold out of country to be turned into value added objects there, we are doomed to face the continued degradation of our forested environment. Selling raw materials will not enhance employment nor make the province rich, it will only lead to forests managed down to the least common denominator and wealth will be generated elsewhere. What we need is a bold move by government to tackle how we see natural resources.

What is needed are initiatives to promote value added wood industries within Nova Scotia. Our Acadian forest is diverse in the woods it can supply as well as other commodities and activities and there is a huge potential for economic benefit to all Nova Scotians. Our forests need to be managed for mature and old-growth characteristics. This does not mean that trees cannot be cut. Careful selective harvesting can be carried out where the intended end use is value added products produced by Nova Scotians keeping the profit within the province. One can only guess what these value added products might be. The best approach will be for government to promote, through subsidies, value added industries and see what innovative entrepreneurs will develop.

As long as the current industry approach is rewarded which is based on low value fiber (pulp, chips, lumber) then the only way to make money is to cut as much as possible and employ a minimum number of people. And this will leave our forests degraded. Industry is resilient, if there is a new way to make a profit they will tackle it.

Changing to value added industries has the potential to end clear cutting, end the use of herbicide spraying and turn our young forests into mature to old-growth forests with greater ecological and economic value that they currently have.