

# The Right Strategy for Stronger Forestry

## More Jobs and a Sustainable Environment

FORESTRY IS VITAL FOR ALL OF NEW BRUNSWICK. More than 13,000 men and women work directly in the industry, and another 9,000 jobs are sustained elsewhere in the economy. Forestry generates \$1.5 billion in annual economic activity and is essential for dozens of communities across the province. And everyone benefits from the contributions to public revenues made by the industry and its workers, paying for essential services like education, health care and infrastructure.

We all know that forestry was one of the original industries that helped build New Brunswick. But we also need to recognize that it remains an essential part of today's modern economy, and that forestry has an important role to play for the future generation.

The challenges facing forestry in New Brunswick today are shared across several sectors of the Canadian economy, and raise many important issues. We are a nation rich in natural resources, providing immense opportunities, but also bringing serious responsibilities. Forestry, mining, oil, gas, hydro-electricity, fisheries—Canada is blessed with all of these riches. And at Unifor, we represent tens of thousands of members in these sectors where workers and their communities face common challenges around the long-term stewardship of the resources.

Important questions of public policy will always generate wide discussion among stakeholders, as they should. The test for good public policy is to find a balance. When it comes to our natural resources we must always consider how to harness them to serve the interests of the public, generate good jobs, support



communities, lead to innovation, and meet the highest standards for environmental stewardship. Addressing these issues

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remains central to shaping our whole economy, and is key to building the kind of society we want. Too often our resources have been reaped to benefit the few, with riches accruing far away, and not enough attention paid to environmental sustainability and the next generation.

**We've carefully reviewed the new Strategy for Crown Lands Forest Management: it is a good plan. We believe it is not only in the best interest of our members, but of New Brunswick.**

Forestry across Canada remains a sector in transition. The past decade delivered incredible challenges including rapidly changing markets, a shift in consumer demand away from newsprint and other papers in the digital age, the devastation of an over-valued Canadian dollar that hit all exporters, and the global financial crisis and recession. Over the last decade, the Canadian industry shed a third of its jobs; in New Brunswick we lost about a quarter of the jobs and 54 mills closed. After painful restructuring that drew on the dedication and sacrifices of forestry workers, the industry is now on a rebound and, most importantly, is poised for a much brighter future.

What is needed now? After a long period of low investment, we now need major investments to modernize equipment, transition toward growing markets, and anchor the industry for the next generation. These are very long term investments. When a company invests hundreds of millions of dollars in machinery and infrastructure, the payback is over a long time horizon. Stability is a key ingredient in the decision to invest.

The industry in New Brunswick needed a better guarantee of a stable supply of wood. With one of the largest shares of forest in private woodlots in Canada, the industry experiences a higher influence of short-term

market factors influencing supply. Increasing the supply and stability of access on crown forests was rightly determined to be an essential ingredient to secure next-generation investments. Not only to provide the stability that the industry needs, but also to secure long-term demand from private woodlot owners.

The strategy, in our view, strikes the right balance. And we've seen results already. The \$450 million investment at Irving Pulp & Paper announced in March is the largest investment in the industry in a decade. It will create 600 full-time equivalent jobs, ensures value-added production here at home, and anchors the operations for the next generation. That is exactly the kind of industrial resource strategy we need. And more investments in the industry are expected.

The strategy also strikes the right balance in its ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship. The amount of Crown forest designated as Protected Natural Areas will nearly double, at least 30% of Crown land is maintained as old forest, and the area for forest renewal is expanded by more than 30%. Investments in new technology spurred by the strategy also mean higher environmental standards and more efficient use of the resource. Perhaps, most critically, government retains full powers of oversight to ensure that provisions of agreements with industry are followed, and the overall strategy is set to be reviewed every five years.

Forestry across the country been hit hard, but is now starting to see a sustained recovery. At Unifor our members recently ratified new collective agreements providing labour stability that establish the pattern for Eastern Canada's pulp and paper industry. And we've been pushing hard to establish a renewed national forestry council to ensure we adopt best-practice policies for the industry.

**Maintaining good jobs in forestry, securing a strong future for the next generation and improving environmental stewardship are all possible—and in all of our interests. We believe the Strategy for Crown Land Forest Management deserves strong support.**

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