

The Roberts report focuses exclusively on wood fibre production in New Brunswick. I strongly believe that herein underlies significant problems with the results and recommendations. If the government truly wants forest management to take a progressive and innovative role, then we must break the current paradigm of exclusively promoting 'different wood management models' and put more emphasis on land management.

Looking at the total of the value of goods and services derived from the land does not have to preclude managing for fibre. On the contrary, I do not think that I am alone in thinking that many opportunities lie in increasing value-added processing and wood-product diversification. This was high-lighted and emphasized throughout the Roberts Report. However, until such time that the suite of these 'other' values are assessed using equally rigorous means, it will remain exceedingly difficult to make decisions on how public lands can be managed to provide the maximum benefits to we, the tax-payers.

The Roberts Report alludes to the impact that government subsidies have on distorting markets yet it advocates organizing "industry visits to key markets in the United States of recommendation #5)." While I do not object to this idea, I would argue that the playing field is not level in relation to evaluating the potential markets for 'other' forest-derived goods and services.

It can be argued that even ignoring direct mill subsidies and loan guarantees, these other types of activities actually are in-fact a form of subsidy. Assuming that ALL government monies going into the sector can be called 'subsidies' of a sort, then I would argue that economically, if even a fraction of the subsidies that have been put towards supporting mills and the forest sector at-large, were put into providing administrative infrastructure for other forest values and products, then there would undoubtedly arise a more diversified forest-based economy.

I would draw your attention to recommendation #7 from the Roberts Report:

I support this recommendation in relation to green products. I believe that an important message in this recommendation is that we could and should use 'branding' here in New Brunswick. However, I strongly believe that the opportunity lies in expanding this approach to include the wider range of goods and services that our forests can provide. That is, if we wish to brand New Brunswick forest products as green, we need to brand our forest 'land management' as green, not just the products. However, we have an opportunity to use branding for a suite of forest-derived goods and services to create new products and tap into existing and expanding markets. This would require a new In so doing, we would be able to market a wider and expanded range of goods and services than is currently being done.

Furthermore, I urge caution in trying to adopt 'a single model' approach for wood fibre production. We only have to look at the challenges in the forest sector to recognize the potential difficulties associated with a single or narrow product (commodity) focus.

Acknowledging my personal bias, I have great concern with the wording in recommendation #7 above of "a Model Sustainable Forest-Based Community in the province" . To me, this wording could be interpreted two ways. A) in a very progressive and integrated way - that is, we treat our province as a community. If done progressively in a way that truly included a multitude of values, then I would wholeheartedly support such an approach. B) However, given the context of the report and its exclusive focus on wood fibre, my confidence in this recommendation is low as it could be used to develop a single 'fibre-only' model.

The fact that the harvest of wood from private woodlots has decreased so drastically over the past 4 years illustrates the danger in taking a fibre only viewpoint.

The focus in the report is how to get the wood off of woodlots 'more economically'. I would suggest that the goal should be how to better integrate harvesting and value-added processing at the local level so that more benefits accrue to the woodlot owners rather than focus exclusively on providing cheaper wood. Using intensive silviculture to produce 'cheaper' wood can and should continue to be the focus of the forest industry and the province has a role in supporting this facet of the forest sector. However, this should only be part of the focus.

Another recommendation is for the Department of Natural Resources "to continue to remove impediments, such as appurtenancy rules and administratively-determined Crown timber allocations...." and "it should retain a key long-term role in provincial timber supply by re-affirming that the Government of New Brunswick is committed to being in the tree growing business."

While the recommendation is to remove administratively-determined Crown timber allocations, it fails to specify how timber from Crown lands will be accessed. If it is totally market-based, then one might argue that whoever pays the most would then be allowed to harvest. The government needs to be in more than just "the tree growing business".

I believe that New Brunswick government should adopt a more diversified 'total' values approach for managing at least some of the Crown Lands. I chose the use of the wording 'some of the Crown Lands' deliberately. Our forests are diverse and as such I believe that different management models could be adopted for different parts of the province based on forest types, community capacity and local interest.

A land-base approach that includes the total value of goods and services obtained per unit land area is needed. This would require a major change in the complexity of developing management plans for areas placed under such a system. The first step in this process will require a comprehensive evaluation of the total socio-economic values that can be attained.

Towards this specific point, I would draw your attention to the Erdle Report in which is acknowledged that socio-economic impacts of different management decisions need to include other values such as those relating to eco-tourism, consumptive and non-consumptive recreation, and non-timber forest products.

In summary, I encourage the New Brunswick government to seriously consider allocating resources to conducting the kinds of studies necessary to fully assess the, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities associated with such an approach. Significant resources were provided to evaluate the wood supply and value-added chain (as evidenced by the Roberts and Erdle reports).