

The Hon. Stephen McNeil
Premier of Nova Scotia
Government House
Halifax, NS B3J 1X5

31 August 2018

Dear Premier:

Thank you for commissioning the Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia. The subject is complex, and public interest is keen. Along with other forest stakeholders, woodland owners have been eagerly awaiting the release of Professor William Lahey's findings.

The twelve undersigned organizations provide services and support on non-industrial, privately owned woodlands across the province. Our members include more than 2,000 family forest owners and 700 other Nova Scotians who are interested in sustainable forest management. We congratulate Professor Lahey on producing a comprehensive, unbiased report. If implemented as presented, his well-reasoned and well-rounded package of recommendations will significantly improve the condition of forests in Nova Scotia.

This is an issue of singular importance to family forest owners. Many of our members want to practice ecological forestry, but they are frustrated by the current lack of options to do so. They also are hampered by insufficient markets to support the economic feasibility of carrying out forest improvement work. Prof. Lahey's recommendations align provincial forest policy with the values of most landowners, giving many more owners an opportunity to participate in active management.

We know that you will face significant pressure to modify some of the recommendations. In discussing the report, each of our organizations identified areas in which we could argue for change. In the end, however, we agreed to support the recommendations as presented in their entirety. We believe this is the first time in the history of Nova Scotia that so many groups representing small woodland owners have spoken with one voice on an issue of provincial policy. To reach our decision, we acknowledged the following realities:

- This is a landscape-level plan intended to balance the demands of many stakeholders while putting the needs of the forest first.
- The recommendations will result in more natural and more valuable forests across the province, which will benefit the forest sector (and the entire Nova Scotia economy) over the long term.
- Even small changes in the package are likely to have significant impacts on forest ecology and economics.

For those reasons, and many others, we endorse the report exactly as it was submitted to you.

We strongly support Professor Lahey's recommendation that ecosystem health and diversity serve as the foundation of forest management in Nova Scotia. As he said, our Crown forests should "lead by example," serving as living demonstrations of the best that we can design and implement in

ecosystem-based forest management. We also endorse his assertion that Nova Scotia needs to elevate the practice of forestry throughout the province, setting higher standards for ethical, science-based management that considers multiple forest values and benefits.

The primary challenge, of course, will be implementing the recommendations in a way that addresses all of Professor Lahey's conclusions. His report is correct in identifying the thorny conflicts that arise when Government is tasked with both landscape-level oversight and stand-level supervision on Crown forests. In addition, he rightly notes the likelihood that changes in Crown land management will put additional pressure on privately owned forests, at least in the short term.

Therefore, we believe that family forest owners should be involved in developing the policies and programs, identifying the research needs, and delivering the improved forest management that will be required to achieve Prof. Lahey's vision for small woodlands.

In recent years, our organizations have collaborated on many projects to increase the number of family forest owners who are informed and active stewards of their lands. We have demonstrated our capacity to successfully undertake this kind of challenge. We will be in touch with your office next week to discuss how we can help to ensure that Nova Scotia gains all of the benefits that can (and should) flow from the recommendations of the Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia.

Best wishes in the upcoming legislative session!

Western Nova Scotia:

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Mersey Tobetic Research Institute, Kempt, NS

Mary Jane Rodger
Medway Community Forest Cooperative, Caledonia, NS

Central Nova Scotia:

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Greg Watson
North Nova Forest Owners Co-operative, Wentworth, NS

Ed MacDonnell
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Eastern Nova Scotia:

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Cape Breton Privateland Partnership, Port Hawkesbury, NS

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Throughout the Province:

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cc:
Deputy Premier Karen Casey
Minister Iain Rankin
Professor William Lahey