

## **PRESS RELEASE: Taxpayers spent \$650 million on clearcut-based forestry in Nova Scotia over past 30 years: Report**

Government support for forestry in Nova Scotia has encouraged an industry dependent on clearcutting, according to a report released by the Ecology Action Centre. The dependence on clearcutting has led to the degradation of Nova Scotia's native Acadian Forest.

The study, entitled "Government Subsidy and Program Support for Nova Scotia's Forest-based Industries", was conducted by consulting firm Jozsa Management & Economics.

It was commissioned by EAC to find out "just how much support and money government has given to the forestry industry, and how this support has affected the quality of forest management in our province," explains Jamie Simpson, forester and spokesperson for the Centre's forestry program.

"It's important to get at the root of why so much of our province is clearcut, and this report sheds some light on the problem."

The report reviews 23 major federal and provincial government policy and program actions over the past century that support forest management based on clearcutting. It finds that the two levels of government have provided more than \$650 million (in 2006 dollars) to Nova Scotia's forest industry in subsidy support since the late 1970s.

It notes that currently companies in Nova Scotia's forest sector receive an additional \$31 million per year in corporate tax credits and other deductions.

"The study documents a history of public money support for a specific type of forestry – one that favours clearcuts, softwood plantations and herbicide spraying," says Simpson.

As an alternative to clearcutting, the Ecology Action Centre along with the Nova Scotia Woodlot Owners and Operators Association (NSWOOA) are urging government to gradually re-direct funding toward forest practices in sync with Nova Scotia's naturally diverse Acadian Forest.

Paul Brison, secretary of NSWOOA, offers that "there are many options available, options practiced by woodlot owners for generations, including natural regeneration of seedlings, selection harvesting and crop tree management, that can restore ecologically healthy forests, while promoting economically valuable stands of trees. We need the government to put more money into practices that help to restore value to our forests, rather than perpetuating the clearcutting system. It shouldn't be so hard to do the right thing."

"Most of the Acadian Forest is best managed by non-clearcut methods," agrees Jeff Amos of Mahone Bay, who owns and manages 400 acres of woodlot.

"Selection harvesting and natural regeneration fit the natural cycle in the Acadian Forest. Instead of paying for herbicides and planting to 'correct' the setbacks caused by clearcutting, we selection cut our woods to increase both the value and volume of trees, while employing more people and generating more economic return from what we take out of the forest."

Charlie Baird, a forestry contractor in the Truro area, echoes these concerns. “If I clearcut, then I can get all kinds of money from the government. I get money for site preparation, money for herbicides, money for planting, money for thinning. As a contractor, this makes clearcutting look appealing. But if I do what I think is best for the woods and long-term economic value, then it’s difficult to get funding.”

Mr. Baird operates a tree harvesting machine and carries out selection harvesting for private land owners. “I am doing selection cutting every day and there is no funding available for some of the treatments we are doing. They don’t fit the tight criteria imposed on us, but we do them anyway, at our own expense,” he says.

The government’s total silviculture budget is \$9 million. Last year, the Department of Natural Resources dedicated \$570,000 of this budget over two years towards activities such as selection harvesting. The entire two-year amount, however, has already been requested by woodlot owners who wish to carry out forestry activities not dependent on clearcutting. As well, government-funded workshops this spring and summer on alternatives to clearcutting have waiting lists for some of the workshop dates.

“While spending 3% of the private land silviculture budget on activities that offer an alternative to clearcutting is a step in the right direction, there is still a clear lack of balance in how taxpayers’ money is spent in the woods,” concludes Simpson.

“If a landowner or a forestry company wants to clearcut their land, then that’s their choice, but the public shouldn’t have to pick up the tab for the planting and herbicides that often follow clearcutting,” Simpson points out.

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The “Government Subsidy and Program Support for Nova Scotia’s Forest-based Industries” report can be accessed on the Ecology Action Centre’s website at [www.novascotiaforests.ca](http://www.novascotiaforests.ca), along with a summary of main findings.

The Ecology Action Centre promotes ecologically and economically responsible forestry, based on sound science and designed to restore Nova Scotia’s native and naturally diverse Acadian Forest and viable rural livelihoods.

### **Background**

Clearcutting and other even-aged forest harvesting practices make up some 94% of forest cutting in Nova Scotia, resulting in over 500 square kilometres of clearcut land in Nova Scotia in 2006 alone.

According to the World Wildlife Fund, an international, science-based conservation organisation, the Acadian Forest is now one of the most endangered forest types in North America.

The government currently spends approximately 97% of its \$9 million private land silviculture budget on post-clearcutting activities. It costs taxpayers approximately \$1450 for each hectare of

plantation created on private land that has been recently clearcut. This cost includes site preparation, planting, herbicide application and thinning, but does not include the costs of decreased wildlife habitat, reduced carbon storage, and degraded economic potential.

Hants County resident Barbara Gallagher, president of the community group Citizens Action to Protect the Environment, has lobbied to ban herbicide spraying in the forest since 2001. She is outraged that the public pays the full cost for herbicides sprayed on private land.

“People can buy up woodlots, clearcut them and then access public money to have them sprayed with herbicides and turned into softwood plantations on the taxpayer’s bill. Why are we putting money into a model of forestry that is obviously not working, and is definitely not sustainable?”

Ms. Gallagher echoes calls from ecologists and woodlot owners to use the money to promote better forestry practices. “What better time to allocate a reasonable percentage to promote uneven-aged forest management, which would diversify our economy by growing high-value trees for value-added industries?” offers Ms. Gallagher.