



More Questions than Answers

Does Auction Announcement Count the Carbon Costs?

Toronto, November 27, 2009 - CPAWS Wildlands League, a public interest group, says that it will closely monitor a wood re-allocation process announced by Minister Gravelle to make sure it serves the public interest, creates jobs and protects the health of the forest. The Minister announced yesterday that ‘Ontario is searching for innovative ways to use logs, branches and other wood in Crown forests ...[to]create green jobs and new investment in the forest industry.’ Proposals are currently being accepted for the use of about 11 million cubic metres of wood.

The group is encouraged by the introduction of a competitive process based on merit to earn the ‘right’ to publicly-owned wood and by the tangible benefits that could result for Ontarians, if designed well. However, it is worried by the lack of robust ecological criteria (such as carbon accounting and broader ecosystem services as metrics of success) in the screening process.

“A high test for sustainability must go hand in hand with decisions on how public forests will be reallocated,” said Janet Sumner, Executive Director for the group. “It’s incumbent upon a government managing a public resource on all our behalf to demand the most jobs per cubic meter cut and to ensure we don’t end up like the Cod fishery,” Sumner cautioned.

The group would like more detailed information on how the figure of 11 million cubic meters was derived beyond that contained in *The Provincial Wood Supply Competitive Process Document* that accompanies the announcement. How did the province determine that the ‘health of the forest’ wouldn’t be compromised by the reallocation? The group would like this analysis to be made publicly available.

Further, the group notes that the announcement did not include a definitive list of the criteria that will determine successful bids.

For example, will a winning bid have to meet environmental criteria such as being carbon-beneficial within our climate change action window of 25 years? How will reassignment of wood affect endangered species habitat needs? Is the province continuing to push industrial practices into intact forests which we know to be a bad idea because natural forests help us fight climate change on many fronts?

“We hope the Minister addresses these questions, drives more jobs per cubic meter and fosters a more vibrant industry,” she continues, “and if he does, some would say he’s pulled the proverbial rabbit out of the hat. Something we environmentalists have been saying is possible for ages, so there’s nothing I’d like more”

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