

# Press Release

For Immediate Release

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## **Environmental groups protest appointment to forestry review panel Bowater Forestry Executive in clear conflict of interest**

Nova Scotia's two largest environmental groups are objecting strongly to the appointment by the government of a senior executive from the Bowater Mersey Paper Company to a supposedly fair and objective review panel in a critical stage of the Province's arms-length Natural Resources Strategy review process. Citing a clear and obvious conflict of interest, Ecology Action Centre and Sierra Club of Canada – Atlantic Canada Chapter are calling on the government to immediately rescind the appointment of Jonathan Porter to the Forest Review panel. The appointments were recommended by a steering panel chaired by former Chief Justice Constance Glube. (see <http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20090723004>).

“Nova Scotians were promised a fair and unbiased public review of Natural Resource management in this province and this is not it” says Raymond Plourde, Wilderness Coordinator for Ecology Action Centre. “Although we mean no offence to Mr. Porter it is simply inappropriate for an executive from one of the major pulp mills – and one of the biggest clear-cutting companies in the province - to participate in the process as a major stakeholder in Phase One and then turn around and be expected to be a fair and unbiased adjudicator in Phase Two. It is outrageous. The conflict of interest is built-in and obvious. There is no way Mr. Porter can separate the interests of his company from the broader public interest. If not corrected the whole strategy will lose public credibility. We are respectfully calling on the minister to fix this mistake immediately.”

The Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act legislates that a new Natural Resources strategy be put in place by 2010, with environmental sustainability a key objective. A rather long and complicated three- phase, arms-length process was developed to accomplish this with an emphasis on public and stakeholder engagement. Thousands of people from across the province participated in the first phase led by Voluntary Planning. At the top of the list of public concerns was the amount of forest clear-cutting by industrial forestry companies. In its final report the Voluntary Planning Committee found that “the current approach to natural resource management is not sustainable.” And that “the status quo is not an option”. It further stated that “Nova Scotians made it clear that change must happen in all areas of natural resource management – and happen soon” and that “There was general consensus that... the new forestry strategy must include a transition away from clear-cutting and toward less environmentally disruptive harvesting methods”. (see <http://gov.ns.ca/govt/vp/NaturalResourcesReport.pdf>)

“We participated in this process in good faith – along with thousands of other Nova Scotians – in hopes that we could rescue our forests and forestry industry from a history of over 90% clear-cutting,” notes Gretchen Fitzgerald, Director of the Sierra Club Canada – Atlantic Canada Chapter. “The appointment of a major forestry industry executive with an obvious interest in preserving the status quo to a panel that is supposed to evaluate without prejudice submissions from all stakeholders shakes our confidence in this process.”

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