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Habitat for wildlife or more wood for J.D. Irving? The government of New Brunswick must decide.

By TRACY GLYN

On the same day that New Brunswickers were rallying for greater wildlife habitat protection in Fredericton, J.D. Irving, the largest license holder of public lands in New Brunswick, was meeting with the Nature Community of Redgwick asking people to support their demand for more wood from the public forest. Approximately 60 people gathered over a blustery rainy noon hour outside the NB Legislature on May 10th, to call on the government of New Brunswick to protect wildlife habitat and reduce clearcutting in the public forest. The rally, organized by CNBA Action (Conservation Council of New Brunswick), was attended by people from across the province including Redgwick, Miramichi, Moncton, Sussex, Saint John and Fredericton. Nature ecologists, professors, woodlot owners, eco-tourism operators, university students and high school students were among the people found in the rally crowd as well as Natural Resources Minister Bruce Northrup.

After respectfully acknowledging that the rally was being held on Maliseet territory that had never been ceded, a number of the speakers highlighted the need to protect wildlife habitat and to preserve the province’s wildlife habitat areas. The speeches were accompanied with clearcutting citizens performed by the Fredericton Raging Grannies.

"With your help, we were successful in delaying a decision by the New Brunswick government to adopt the former Liberal government’s disastrous 50 year plan that would devastate wildlife habitat in our public forest," said David Coon with CDNB Action. The former Liberal government’s plan was to clearcut 10% of the province’s forest lands from 10% to 28%. According to Graham Forbes, a wildlife biologist at the University of New Brunswick, many species that need old forest will be unable to survive. "The topic of reducing clearcutting and conversion to plantations if there are not enough untouched stands of 375 ha with trees of a certain size and type. Of the 148 species that the government of New Brunswick lists as endangered, 70% depend on these types of forest." We have to remember that Mother Earth does not really need us, but we need her. And I think that’s worth protecting."

Charline Mayes, a biologist at the University of New Brunswick, said: "Our clearcutting and reforestation are outdated and destructive practices. Relatively few people are going to benefit from clearcutting and monoculture whereas if you keep the forested lands intact and functioning as nature meant them to, all New Brunswickers benefit and the greater population of Canada and so on benefits," added Mayes. "The 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change tells us that all planetary support systems are highly stressed and the reason for this is habitat loss and degradation. A prudent government would err on the side of caution. Minister Northrup, I urge you and the Premier and your colleagues to adopt a new plan in favour of wildlife preservation and reforestation."

Pascale Ouellette, a Grade 12 student at École Ste. Anne in Fredericton and a member of the Youth Action Group, read a section of the Youth Biodiversity Accord that she helped draft with other youth from across the province in 2010. In addition to calling on the government to reduce clearcutting and ban herbicide spraying of the public forest, Ouellette called on the government to immediately increase the province’s biodiversity standard to current science-based recommendations.

Following the rally, Minister Northrup said, "It was a good gathering. They have a statement to make and they made it today. We are working on the five year management plan as we speak."

Also on the same day as the rally, Nova Scotia made media headlines with the purchase of 2500 ha of forest by half. The Nova Scotia NDP government has also committed to stop funding herbicide spraying of their forest. Meanwhile, Coon notes New Brunswickers will be paying more for companies like J.D. Irving to spray herbicides on the public forest. "Our tax dollars are used to pay for replacing natural forest with plantations and dousing them with herbicides at the costly rate of $1,000/ha. That will add up to over $800 million over the next 50 years if the Liberal plan is adopted."

Meanwhile, J.D. Irving is mobilizing and asking people to write letters to elected representatives on their behalf. They are calling on people to defend their jobs and their communities. Critics of J.D. Irving’s control of the province’s public lands, like the Conservation Council, say the company really wants more control of public land, to clearcut more public forest and to spray more natural mixed wood forest for their tree farms. They say their plan to clearcut more wood from public land is not only detrimental to wildlife but also to thousands of woodlot owners and many others employed in tourism, recreation and non-timber forest product sectors.

During the worst of the forestry crisis in British Columbia, Fairfax Culpepper, a labour activist in Vancouver, commented on the jobs argument used by management of companies controlling their forest. “The Jim Pattison and Harold Stantons of the world don’t work, yet they make all the profit. If any jobs need to be ’shed’, it’s theirs. The owners of these companies do nothing for the mills’ employees or their communities, they solely profit off of their labour while not working at all.” [Fairfax Culpepper, July 10, 2008] “New Brunswick should follow our neighbours into the 21st century and abandon destructive forestry,” stresses Coon.

The Fight against homophobia in Canada

By NAIJAT ABDU-MCFARLAND

Many people around the world were shocked to learn of Uganda’s anti-homosexuality bill, which would have imprisoned or exiled homosexuals, banned or repeat offenders, and jailed for up to three years anyone who failed to report within 24 hours the identities of anyone they know who is LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender). The bill, promoted by the country’s evangelical church leaders with connections to American evangelical church leaders, was defeated in the parliament with the rejection of a motion to send it forward again when parliament resumes. In 2010, a newspaper in Uganda published a list of names of parliamentarians calling for them to be hanged for homosexuality. In January of this year, leading gay rights activist David Kato was beaten to death in his home in the Ugandan capital of Kampala. He was one of the men listed in the newspaper. In contrast, LGBT people have won significant rights in Canada. The same-sex marriage bill passed on July 20, 2005 – even though Prime MinisterStephen Harper tried to push the coalition Union onto LGBT people, which would have classified their relationships as inherently different than a heterosexual union. This was rejected as discriminatory by the LGBT community.

The International Day Against Homophobia, May 17th, is a day when the LGBT community stand together against discrimination, and remember those who have been victims of harassment and assaults. The global day of action originated in Quebec with Fondation Emergence organizing a national day against homophobia in 2003. The idea quickly spread to other parts of Canada, including the United Kingdom and the United States.

This year, a small group of people gathered at the New Brunswick Legislature in Fredericton to mark the global day of action and take a stand against homophobia in the workplace, at schools and in the wider community. Representatives from the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the NB NDP and Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) spoke at the rally in Fredericton.

In Toronto, PFLAG Canada marked the day by launching an awareness campaign in public transit locations and in print media. The campaign focuses on raising awareness of the support it offers all Canadians facing challenges of sexual orientation and gender identity. It draws attention to the shocking truth that one third of suicides in Canada are committed by people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender – six times the rate of the heterosexual population, and most prevalent among youth. (cont’d page 2)