You are invited to take a minute, close your eyes and recall your childhood experiences in the forests of New Brunswick.

My memory is of walking too far into a young stand of spruce that got so dense and crowded with sharp branches, that not even a young deer could move through. A person would almost have to crawl on their hands and knees to get through. This is what I thought a forest to be – because that is all that I knew. I had no idea how far the forest was from its natural state.

It was not until I was in my late twenties that I started to understand the importance and rarity of the Acadian/Wabanaki forest. As Community Forests International said in a recent press release for their Forgotten Forests Campaign, it “is one of Canada’s most diverse and endangered temperate forest types, yet is largely unknown.”

How do we not understand the value of this ecosystem? Likely, that is due to there being less than one per cent of old growth forest left in New Brunswick. Old growth has many definitions, but for simplicity we can say: found in a state similar to pre-colonial era (although we are not yet in the post-colonial era in many ways, including how we manage natural resources).

The World Wildlife Fund classified the Wabanaki forest among the most interesting forest types in Canada. Of the one per cent of remaining old growth, most of it is not contiguous, which means that it can be found only in small patches in various eco-regions of the province. Animals that need old growth habitat, like flying squirrels for instance, end up marooned in certain regions. There is too much too much monoculture forest, and too many roadways and developed areas to allow the wildlife to move to new areas on their own.

The Sackville-based non-profit, Community Forests International, has recently launched a campaign to protect 2,500 acres of endangered forest called “The Forgotten Forest.”

Community Forests International says that, “The small remnants of this forest that remain intact today are often on hilltops and in hard-to-access ravines, where forest clearing could not easily reach. Forest Program Manager, Craig Tupper and his colleagues have spent the last year searching for these remnants—which are usually found in corners of larger properties—and have lined up sales agreements with several private landowners.”

The organization has secured 80 per cent of the required funds to purchase woodlands through private foundations and now they are asking New Brunswickers for support.

Community Forests have done some admirable forest restoration projects over the years. To date, they have protected over 3,000 acres of ecologically valuable Acadian forest. Their work is not only about conservation, but about restoration. On May 13, I had the opportunity to attend a workshop hosted by Community Forests International and the Nashwaak Watershed Association on Climate Adaptive Silviculture.

The Wabanaki forest is a hemi-boreal forest, where northern species like spruce, poplar, tamarack and birch mix with species from areas in the southern reaches of the Maritimes and New England. These tree species include oak, pine, maple and hemlock. This forest type has been quite diverse before colonial interference. We had forest fires only every thousand years or so, so most of the changes in the forest came in smaller patches through wind or insect damage.

The workshop taught us how warmer overall conditions, followed by intense wet periods and drought cycles would damage or weaken the boreal species, but favour the most southerly hardwoods. Extreme coastal weather like hurricanes put softwood monoculture stands at a higher risk for large blowdown events as they are shallow rooted and tend to be even-aged stands.

Landowners can select for the most climate adaptive trees to lessen some of the damage of climate change. Forest Program Director Megan de Graaf explained to our group that, “Our forests are currently very vulnerable to the risks of climate change, due to the over-representation of boreal-affiliated softwoods on the landscape (a product of past human intervention). This represents a ‘kicking the carbon time bomb’ for our forests, since the rate of climate change is four times faster than the natural rate of adaptation in forests.” Just as human intervention shaped the forest to be what it is today, we also need to take an active role in restoration.

Old forests are not the only interest for Community Forests International. They plan to purchase and restore areas that have been harvested also, using a practice called reforestation – actively managing younger forests back to their full ecological potential to augment their ability to sequester carbon and adapt to climate change. While scientists struggle to build expensive and massive carbon drawdown facilities, we have this free and proven resource in our own backyard.

While timber prices are dismal, we simply cannot put a price on the value of a climate stable forest that helps to clean our atmosphere. Why not invest in our own future by supporting our remarkable Wabanaki forest?

Amy Floyd and her partner Drew Gilbert have recently become stewards of a small woodlot and former soil mining site on the Nashwaak River and are actively working on restoration with the help of the Nashwaak Watershed Association through the Nashwaak Forest Stewardship Project.

This article was won the 2022 Brian Beaton Annual Prize in Journalism for Justice.
instead of the more reliable "median family" is a political choice. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has criticized this as being, income, is $50,140. Then, the - - who tend to think of themselves as an "average family" - into believing that they pay nearly half their income in

Finally, by their own admission, the authors note that it is difficult to estimate how much an individual or a family pays directly towards health care costs because that’s simplified and transfers the government’s stock of health care to individuals and families with the help of a central government. Generally speaking, health care is funded from general revenues.

The attempt to then conjure up a number for how much individuals and families are spending on public health care at times becomes immediate and concrete. This is because the question they must answer is: what revenue source must be excluded in this experimental calculation, and what is the possible impact from that.

The answer to that question tells us exactly which team the Fraser Institute is playing for. Right off the bat, it appears that they have excluded corporate income taxes from this analysis. Accounting for corporate income taxes would probably yield a smaller percentage of income tax revenue spent on health care because the amount of income that has been declared as income could be reduced. Now, it is possible that they already adjusted for the revenue from corporate income taxes in coming up with their 23.9 per cent figure, but - again - we don’t know that because they haven’t shared their calculations.

What about the impact from other sources of government revenue like sales taxes and royalties? Well, the authors note that they did not include sales taxes in their calculations and also fund health care, but they say nothing about how they adjust for the impact of those revenue sources. Again, we are forced to assume that they simply did not include them in their calculations.

Their goal, clearly, is to leave the reader with the impression that the “average family” is shouldering a disproportionate share of health care costs. Generally, only they knew, then maybe they’d be open to something else. What that “something else” could be, I’m sure, is empirical and clear – and presumably corporate funders – of the report.

Make no mistake. This Fraser Institute report is the oldest political trick in the “think tank” playbook – take the numbers you want to work with, make acknowledgements about other data that exist to create the impression of academic integrity, ignore them anyway, and use the rest of your data to fuel political campaigns for your paymasters.

If they had submitted this report for peer review, it would have been shredded. It does not require too much reading between the lines to find that the Fraser Institute’s report is intended to make the case for the privatization of health care and queue jumping for the rich who can pay for health care. The public health care system takes doctors and health care staff and resources away from the public system, which is why the authors in this report are more concerned about profits than quality health care.

Privatization of health care is not going to help Dieppe resident Marilyn Marnette who cannot afford to take time off work to go to the doctor. Having a private insurance policy, she now needs to go to a clinic. When she asked for an appointment, she was told she had to wait for six months.

The public health care system that has been gutted of the services to the elderly or those with chronic conditions. Clinics accept the healthiest and wealthiest, often refusing off work to go to her cancer treatments, as reported in the description of the Fraser Institute. Unattached single individuals will pay $4,907. But this is not correct. First, the report relies on the Fraser Institute’s “Canadian Tax Simulator” which has been criticized by economists for inflating the amount of taxes that individuals pay by thousands of dollars.

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