



Fast

FACTS

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES - MANITOBA

September 22, 2020

Forestry plan favours industry, not people

First published in the Winnipeg Free Press September 14, 2020

The way long-term, large-scale forest management planning is approved by the Pallister government is about to change. And not for the better, I might add.

In the spring of 2020, the Manitoba Minister of the Conservation and Climate (Sarah Guillemard) issued a mandate letter to the Chair of the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission (CEC). The Minister requested that the CEC provide the Minister with a report that “reviews the existing approvals process for Forest Management Plans (FMP) in this province.”

In the Terms of Reference, issued by the Minister to the CEC, it was very clear in whose interest this report should be focused on, as the Minister stated clearly that, “(t)he forest industry has raised concerns that the two approval processes for a FMP are duplicative and are not in line with the approval processes of other Canadian jurisdictions.”

This despite the fact that there are a multitude of other users of our publicly owned forests. None more important than First Nations and Métis who have specific Section 35 Rights that are enshrined in the Canadian Constitution. These Rights are directly affected, and probably adversely, when it comes to forest management planning in this province.

This forest industry focus in this report is also reflected in the fact that CEC never once consulted, while preparing its

report, with any organization or group that represents the interests of other forest users of our publicly owned forests.

The current, broad strokes, approvals process for long-term 20-years FMPs for forestry companies who hold Forest Management Licence Agreement to harvest trees on very large tracts of forested lands in this province, there are two such companies - Louisiana Pacific and Tolko Industry - is to prepare a 20 year FMP in accordance with the Manitoba Forestry Act. This then gets approved via the Manitoba Environment Act, as a Class 2 Development project. This so called “two approvals process” acts as a check and balance mechanism for both the government department who manages our publicly owned forests and for the forest industry that harvest our public forest.

Given the length of time, the sheer volume and the area harvested over this 20 year period, these FMPs then undergo a full public panel review by the Clean Environment Commission.

All of this is about to change, based on the report prepared and submitted to the Minister in May of 2020 by the CEC, which, in my opinion will only serve to reduce public and government oversight in the planning process, while saving both the government and the forest companies money in the approvals process stage.

This should come as no surprise, given that the Pallister government has made

there is an alternative.

CCPA-MB
301 - 583 Ellice Ave.
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 1Z7

phone

(204) 927-3200

email

ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca

website

[www.policyalternatives.ca/
manitoba](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/manitoba)

blog

www.policyfix.ca

twitter

@ccpamb

continued..

it very clear they want less government and less government spending as their objective - as they have cutback government departmental spending at all levels since coming into power. This government's preoccupation with instituting government austerity measures is to the direct determinant of peoples health, their welfare and the protection of our Province's environment.

The new FMP regime being recommended by the CEC, to the Minister, would see FMPs exempt from approval, as a Class 2 Development, under the Manitoba Environment Act altogether and approval of 20 year FMPs would be done through "Ministerial Agreements" that may or may not be legally binding or enshrined in legislation, and if so it will be done at some future date.

I have had many problems with the current approval process for FMPs, mostly because there is far to much discretionary powers given to the Director of Environmental Approval under the Manitoba Environment Act and the fact that FMPs should have been designated as a Class 3 Development to begin with under the Manitoba Environment Act.

However, what is now being recommended by the CEC is a total regression, and not a progression. If it were a progression it would provide for more public and government oversight to insure our publicly owned forests in Manitoba are managed properly for all forest users and not just for the forest industry. It does not do this.

Finally, I am absolutely appalled, in this age of reconciliation, that there is not one word in this entire CEC document that mentions First Nations and Métis Section 35 Rights and how these Rights are dealt with in this new FMP regime, nor how these Rights will be accommodated in the new proposed FMP approval process.

The changes proposed by the Pallister government on how it will manage and plan for our forests into the future is not in the interests of the vast majority of Manitobans. They should be opposed.

Don Sullivan is a published landscape photographer, freelance writer, the former director of the Boreal Forest Network and served as special adviser to the government of Manitoba on the Pimachiowin Aki UNESCO World Heritage site portfolio. He is a research affiliate with the Canadian Centre for Policy

CCPA-MB
301-583 Ellice Ave.
Winnipeg, MB
R3B 1Z7

phone
(204) 927-3200

email
ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca

website
www.policyalternatives.ca/
manitoba

blog
www.policyfix.ca

twitter
@ccpamb