

N.S. opens door to community forest projects

Locally operated woodlots 'huge opportunity'

By **BEVERLEY WARE**
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HUBBARDS — The province asked groups Monday to submit proposals to operate Crown forestlands in their communities.

Premier Darrell Dexter said the forestland would be property not already subject to a Crown lease, and the first pilot project will be in southwestern Nova Scotia, the region hit by the closure of Resolute Forest Product's operations in Queens and Lunenburg counties.

"We would look for proposals to come to the Department of Natural Resources," Dexter said in an interview.

"(The groups) will propose the size, they will propose an activity, they would propose a plan of management for the forest, so it's not predetermined. It puts that proposal back to the community and says you tell us what it is you can manage."

He made the announcement to an audience packed into the Hubbards Barn & Community Park. Many were there because they thought the premier would announce the province has a deal to buy Bowater Mersey's lands.

Amanda Lavers, executive director of the Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute near Kejimikujik National Park, worked during the summer with several groups with vested in-



Amanda Lavers, executive director of the Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute, welcomed the province's announcement Monday that a community forest pilot project will be established in southwest Nova Scotia.
(PETER PARSONS / Staff)

environment," she said.

Kent Dykeman, area forestry manager for LP Canada, which makes prefinished siding at a mill near East Chester, said the impact of Bowater Mersey's closure "has been very noticeable to us."

LP Canada is the largest purchaser of hardwood in western Nova Scotia and bought some of that wood from Bowater.

However, Dykeman said the plant uses several suppliers,

including private, industrial and Crown landowners because it is important to ensure no one supplier gets overstressed.

"We welcome the idea of a working community forest to ensure the wood supply for all the mills in the area, to keep that supply certified, and to create the ability for all the community to access all these large land areas for hunting, fishing and other activities, but in a controlled way."

Chris Miller, a conservation biologist with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, praised the announcement as a creative approach to managing Nova Scotia's forests while keeping control of what happens to those lands in the hands of affected communities.

Community operations tend to have far less impact on the environment than those owned by large companies because the former use "a lighter

touch," he said.

Shawn Little, who has an In-grapport camp on government land he leases, said although he had hoped for an announcement on the sale of Bowater's land, he added that he was not disappointed with what the premier had to say.

"I think it is good in theory. Why give the land to someone else that's going to profit, right? Keep it here. Work with what we've got."

But Ruby Seffern wasn't happy. Her family has owned and worked forestland in New Ross for nearly 200 years. Seffern and her husband own 344 hectares, just over 30 of which are used to grow Christmas trees, and they used to sell waste wood to Bowater.

"I'm not sure that the people in the community are going to get the benefit that we've just been told that we will get," Seffern said.

She is concerned only a select group will get to benefit from any projects, and said "we are very, very concerned about where the cost is going to come from to maintain this."

Dexter said income generation will be an integral part of a group's proposal when government is reviewing applications.

And he said the aim is to be flexible so that proposals will reflect differing objectives in various provincial areas.

The deadline for applications is Jan. 31.

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