

NOTICE OF URGENT PUBLIC MEETING

“What Ever Became of Buy Back the Mersey?”

MONDAY OCT. 20, 7pm, HUBLEY COMMUNITY CENTRE

4408 St. Margaret's Bay Rd.



Two years ago...

...right here at this very spot, Hubley, NS, the province-wide *Buy Back the Mersey* movement was born. Thousands of volunteer hours later, the province did just that - they bought back the former Bowater-Mersey lands. We thought we'd won, that all our hard work to ensure that we, Nova Scotians, would finally have a say in the management of our own resource had succeeded. But guess what? We were wrong. The opposite is happening. We are being marginalized, ignored, and opposed at every turn. Our own Department of Natural Resources is licensing harvest on OUR lands, with no transparency, no accountability, and no assurance of good practices. It's same old same old, only worse.

We want better for Nova Scotia's forests!

The Natural Resources Strategy has been in place for over two years. Has there been progress on its goals like reducing clearcutting by 50%? Government agreed to "build a culture of collaboration, innovation, and mutual accountability" and "include interested groups (like us!) in planning and decision making." So far, nothing. Nada. Zero.

Government made huge demands on communities' efforts to manage their own forests. Were the same demands made on those to whom licenses *were* granted, those who have been clearcutting even on "environmentally sensitive areas" identified in the government's own Western Crown Lands Plan?

Are we on a level playing field?

As unpaid volunteers we spent years intervening in the Natural Resources Strategy consultations, in the Western Crown Lands consultations, in the Buy Back campaign, in trying to establish a role for communities in forest management, and for what?

Was it all for nothing?

Join us October 20th. Together, we'll get things back on track.

We have five clear demands for your review:

1. ***Before licenses are issued, make applicants' plans public.*** The same criteria used to judge our Community Forests proposals should apply to all applicants. How will the community benefit? How will the environment be protected? Have First Nations been consulted? We laid out workable plans to kick start the rural economy – did they? *Let's level the playing field.*
2. ***No more secret deals.*** When we learned Northern Pulp's allocation had doubled, we had to petition the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Office (FOIPOP) for information. That's not the way things should go. We want transparency.
3. ***No long term allocations until community consent mechanisms are in place.*** After a year of short term leases with no consultation, now long term allocations are in the works. Will they too have to be FOIPOPped *after* the fact? No. This is not acceptable.
4. ***Concrete guarantees for better forest practices*** - the NS Natural Resource Strategy must be realized, not just in words, but *in practice*. When it says we'll be involved in planning and decision-making, we want to be involved in planning and decision-making. We didn't sweat volunteer blood on the Strategy to have its fundamentals ignored.
5. ***Recognition of municipal interests.*** How their Natural Resource lands are exploited is vitally important to our municipalities. At the very least, they deserve a place at the table. They must be kept informed and play a part in decision-making.

Recent articles have suggested DNR's role should be relegated to promotion and facilitation and their regulatory responsibilities should go to the Department of Environment. Should this be a sixth point for us? Are there more points you would like included?

We are organized. We are determined. We need your involvement.

We must build our coalition. Take on tasks. Ensure that the changes that *must* be made, *get* made.

Together we can rekindle that singleness of purpose which made *Buy Back the Mersey* such a success. Your energy and expertise are needed. Your support in getting the word out, encouraged. Your donations too would be extremely helpful.

Thanks. See you on the 20th!

The BUY BACK Team

For more information, please contact SMBStewardship@gmail.com or call 823-1404.