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## **AFPA Report Raises Concerns Over Unsustainable Forest Management**

For decades, AWA has called out Alberta Forestry for their outdated and poor forest management laws, policies, and practices. We recently received a 2020 report prepared by the Alberta Forest Products Association (AFPA; a non-profit that represents the Alberta forestry industry) that intensifies our concerns that forest management in this province is still heading in the wrong direction.

Rather than adapting to “modern” ideas about ecological sustainability, the Alberta forestry industry seems to desperately hang on to this outdated concept of sustained yield (where the amount of timber on the landscape stays the same over time), and uses greenwashing language to convince the public that we are world leaders in sustainable forest management – despite evidence otherwise. I say “modern” because the current definition of sustainable forest management, coined at the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, was developed in 1993. This near-30-year-old definition takes into account forests as ecosystems with a vast suite of values, not solely as a resource to be extracted. Alberta still has a long way to go before they can claim – with any validity – that forest management prioritizes and protects ecosystem values.

The report, entitled *“Investigating Innovative Ways to Improve and Enhance the Forest Resources in Alberta”* was prepared to provide recommendations to former Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Devin Dreeshen about how “to increase wood supply from Crown land, without jeopardizing sustainability.” The very concerning recommendations in this report, including allocating more unsustainable annual allowable cut, logging in protected areas, and implementing intensive forest management, would certainly exacerbate existing issues of unsustainable forest management.

The report claims that to increase

timber supply, some harvesting could occur in protected areas to address forest “health risks” and as a post-event recovery treatment, but that this would be “challenging due to social expectations.” Our concerns about parks and protected areas being opened up to logging have been made worse by the recent re-shuffling of ministries that puts the *Provincial Parks Act* and the *Willmore Wilderness Park Act* in the same ministry as Forestry and Tourism, rather than the ministry of Environment and Protected

Areas. This comes on top of comments by new Premier Danielle Smith that forestry could be used to open up parks to off-highway vehicles (OHVs).

Logging is incompatible with the intent of parks, which are maintained for conservation, outdoor recreation, and for lasting protection for the benefit of present and future generations. Logging harms both the ecological and aesthetic value of parks, thus decreasing their recreational value. If measures are taken to reduce risks from natural disturbance in parks and

protected areas, these should be separate from goals to increase timber supply. Risk reduction strategies such as prescribed or traditional burning should be considered first due to their ecological benefits that logging does not emulate.

AWA has written to Minister Todd Loewen regarding these and other concerns, and we hope to meet with him to discuss how Alberta can move towards true sustainable forest management.

- By Devon Earl