

Appendix C / Annexe C

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National forest programmes: An international perspective and challenges for Canada Presentation by Dr. Jeremy Rayner

Thank you very much for inviting me here today. It is a pleasure to come and talk to you about some of the work that I've been doing on National Forest Programmes. Some of what I say today is going to be, perhaps, a little bit critical and I apologize for that in advance, and I want to try to dispel any confusion or misunderstandings to begin with. As you will see, I think that the National Forest Strategy is a really very remarkable achievement – something that as Canadians we can all be very proud of. I think that we should be working constantly to improve it, and that's the spirit in which I hope my remarks will be taken today.

Twenty years ago, when I first got started in thinking about issues of this kind, I was a young political scientist at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, and I got involved in some forestry-related research, which eventually led to a study of district managers' attitudes toward public involvement. Remember we are talking about the 1980's. This was a real eye-opener for me. I flew around Northern Ontario interviewing district managers, which is one of the reasons my beard has gone white – the stress of those flights on those tiny little plans in the winter. There was an absolutely fascinating distinction at that time between the older district managers of that era, who really would not give this issue the time of day and they could barely bring themselves to say the term “stakeholder” and the younger district managers who were very keen, who were gratifyingly interested in the project, were obviously representing the future of forest management in Canada. It is of course on their achievements that we have been able to build what we have today. Since moving to the coast, I have expanded this interest into a number of other areas, including fisheries and aquaculture. There again, the contrast with forestry is absolutely striking, given how far we have been able to come in involving the public in forest policy issues, in a constructive way, compared with other sectors.

The other day I was “googling” a few terms and jotting down the results and I came across something called “Blind Freddy's Guide to Fisheries Management.” Now “blind Freddy” as I understand is an Australian term and on the Internet you have no idea where these things are located, so I suspect this was Australian – it had kind of gallows humour that is associated with many Australians. There was a very tongue-in-cheek glossary of terms and I got to where it said “bottom-up-approach” and the definition was self-explanatory, e.g., bend over boss there's a delegation of stakeholders to see you. That represents a reality that we were familiar with twenty years ago. That kind of attitude that this is going to be a very painful experience but none the less you've got to grin and bear it is still common in many other resource sectors. I don't think we really have that attitude in forestry today. The National Forest Strategy is a good example of how far we have come.

My task today is to try to make some connections between the work that is being done around the world on National Forest Programmes and the Strategy. I was fortunate to spend sabbatical last year in Europe talking to people who were involved in NFPs, as I'll call them today, in Europe. I was involved in one of their projects in trying to assess their progress toward the implementation of NFPs. I really have three things to discuss today. One is to explain what an NFP is, and whether we can sensibly describe the National Forest Strategy as Canada's NFP. Then, open the question of whether we should be thinking about exporting the Canadian model of the Strategy to other countries who are engaged in NFP development. What have we got here that is world leading that we can send to other countries? The third item is to pose some questions about the future development of the Strategy.

The challenge for everybody, including Canadians, is encapsulated in paragraph eight of the United Nations Forum on Forests Plan of Action, which states that countries will develop or strengthen, as appropriate, National Forest Programmes as defined in the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action or other integrated programmes relevant to forests, with the aim of achieving a holistic and comprehensive approach to sustainable forest management.

Notice a number of things about this paragraph. One is the reference to IPF/IFF Proposals for Action, which I will talk about in a moment. The other is what I call the escape clause – the fact that National Forest Programmes are set alongside other integrated programmes relevant to forests. They are presented as alternatives. Countries are not required to develop an NFP, but nonetheless are asked to produce something that looks like an integrated programme relevant to forests. Then, the description at the end of “holistic and comprehensive approaches to sustainable forest management.” All of this, of course, in the context of IPF/IFF Proposals reminds us of the absence of a binding international convention on forestry around the world. If we had such a convention, then there would be legal obligations on countries to do something like this. Right now of course this is just soft international law. The paragraph is a statement of countries' desires as expressed through UNFF.

The plan of action that was produced in the 1990's by the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and its successor, the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, stated that there should be, the countries who signed that plan of action committed themselves to progress through national forest and land-use programmes. I want to say this at the outset because I, like everybody else, fall into the trap about talking about NFPs because it's easy to do so. The original plan of action said “national forest and *land-use* programmes” - they envisaged the development of sustainable forest management in a holistic context in which the use of forests would be seen as part of the use of the entire landscape, and to some extent, rather, backed off from this.

There were six proposals as part of this plan of action, including holistic national forest programmes that integrate conservation and sustainable use of forest resources, as well as improved cooperation and coordination among stakeholders. The plan of action also asked countries to develop and apply criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of their progress, and they suggested that it would be necessary to monitor and evaluate the implementation of progress. Already, you can probably see some connections to the National Forest Strategy and the things that we have been doing in Canada.

In the absence of hard international law on sustainable forest management and international commitments, the NFP idea has been left deliberately open. It has been left open in the sense that the UNFF does not want to see a restrictive definition of an NFP, which would allow us to be able to say that some countries are doing it while other countries are not.

There are thus a wide variety of approaches that are acceptable ways of having a national forest programme. However, some key ideas have emerged. The basic idea is to improve forest policy by encouraging participation and learning. That connection is an important one. Participation is not just value for its own sake. The whole network approach to policy creation, formulation and implementation is connected in the minds of the people who drafted this idea, with the idea that it improves policy learning. That people who participate in forums like this can improve forest policy by interacting with each other.

It also encourages a longer-term orientation to forest policy. In many parts of the world, the orientation to forest policy is distressingly short term. Consequently, the long-term orientation was front and centre. Finally, there is the idea of improving coordination between actors in forest policy. This is very dear to my own heart as a political scientist – the coordination problems that result from the interaction of the different users in the forest, or the different uses of coastal resources. For me this is fascinating – for you, probably very frustrating and challenging in many ways.

Let us briefly look at these three points in more detail. Improving forest policy by encouraging participation and learning has largely been expanded into the idea of promoting the development of forest policy networks. This is exactly the kind of activity that the National Forest Strategy has been engaged in, and it has had a very powerful connection with the movement for decentralization in forest policymaking and forest management.

This morning, I was reminded of the development of National Forest Programmes out of the old Tropical Forest Action Plans. In those parts of the world where we have tropical forestry, the movement for decentralization has been put forward as a way of circumventing central governments whose lack of capacity, to put it politely, has often caused enormous problems in the implementation of any kind of plans. But in the developed world we see the same movement toward decentralization and the empowerment of regional and local authorities, and exactly the same problems. What kind of capacity do regional districts need, for example, in order to engage in the formulation and implementation of forest policies?

A strong commitment to community involvement is part of encouraging participation and learning. We're not just talking about levels of government; we're talking about encouraging participation from the communities that depend upon the forest for their livelihoods.

In terms of the long-term orientation, there is a stress here on understanding forest policy making as an iterative process – one in which we return again and again to the plan or the program. This is something that we are very familiar with in Canada, a in terms of forest management, but iterative planning may be less familiar in other parts of the world. The process itself should enable positive feedback and learning, as the result of returning to the process again. Here we

have to understand that there is possibly a trade off between long-term orientation and adaptability – that nature and society throw curve balls and we get surprised every now and then and have to change our plans. Sometimes by the consequences of our own actions, sometimes by things we didn't foresee. The long-term orientation can't be so rigid that we are unable to adapt to those outcomes. Here again, we can start to make connections to with the way the National Forest Strategy has been set up and the way that it addresses many of those concerns under long-term orientation.

To improve coordination, consistency between national policies and international commitments is a big concern, obviously, at the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). The use of national forest programmes is conceived of as a way of moving the sustainable forest management agenda internationally, through national governments. In Europe, one of the main driving forces behind the commitment to national forest programmes was the accession of Eastern European countries to the European Union, and the problem of how to harmonize policies of the European Union countries with those of non-European Union countries. NFPs can do this in a non-threatening way. Very early on, NFPs brought the two groups of countries into the same forum to discuss issues of common concern.

The integration of forest policy with other sustainability strategies is very much an issue for Canada. We have lots of initiatives going on which supposedly promote our sustainability agenda. Coordination between them has not always been our strong point. The holistic and inter-sectoral approach needs to go beyond the old idea of multiple-use. Very often, especially in the Tropical Forest Action Plans, for example, coordination was simply coordination at the interface of agriculture and forests. In Canada, there are many examples in which we think of coordination or inter-sectoral coordination as between two sectors at most. An NFP is an attempt to look at the entire sectoral coordination problems, and ask what would be required to make those sectors work together in a productive way. Here, of course, we have to understand the tradeoffs between coordination and participation. Coordination does suggest some kind of top-down, some kind of more rigid way of, organizing influence and involvement. Whereas the frustrating part of participation, if not coordinated, is that it tends to go out in all sorts of directions and it follows its own logic. As I'm sure you are aware, one of the question marks about the National Forest Strategy is the extent to which it has been able to remain focussed on some of the important issues that it in itself has identified.

What I would like to report on briefly, to you, are these developments in Europe that I'm familiar with and their implications to Canada. There was a strong commitment to National Forest Programmes, as I've mentioned, made by this body called the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE). The MCPFE was a very important group to move the NFP agenda forward in Europe. They were able to involve ministers, in some cases prime ministers and presidents, to meet at regular intervals and discuss Europe-wide forest problems and really get that momentum to move the agenda forward. There was a factor here that raised the incentive to have an NFP. The European Union now requires states to have a National Forest Programme in place in order to receive rural development funding for forestry-related projects. That really has persuaded most of the holdouts in Europe that it is a good idea to have an NFP. France, for example, did not have an NFP for a very long time and finally, the problems they were having with rural development funding persuaded them that they had better have one. The

Europeans funded this research project, which I was involved in, under their Cooperation on Science and Technology program (COST) to find out more about how National Forest Programmes had worked in the European context. From Europe we can see the development of these NFPs in rich countries, some with high forest cover, significant forest industry, and with federal states. That was my interest in this. Here was a group of countries engaged in this project for NFPs, many of whom were not unlike Canada - wealthy, high forest cover remaining, significant forest industry and federal states. We might be able to learn from this experience. The key question that the researchers asked themselves, was, does a country have a national forest programme just because its policymakers and diplomats say so? Back to the UNFF definition, drawn so broadly that it might be possible for a country to say "yes" because it does this, that, or something else. The core researchers came up with these four core components of an NFP, in which they use to try to distinguish between symbolism and substance.

The core components of NFPs, they say, are participation, collaboration, inter-sectoral coordination and a long-term iterative adaptive approach. How does Canada compare against these four? Let me note that there is an issue here, in Canada, about what is our NFP. The progress reports on the G8 Action Plan on Forests talks about the national forest programme in Canada consisting of many programs of which the National Forest Strategy is one. But the model forests and other programs are also parts of our NFP. However, the United Nations Secretary General's report on NFPs does identify the National Forest Strategy as Canada's NFP. This is what I'm working on – the claim that the Strategy is our NFP. Using the criteria developed by the Europeans, can we say whether the Strategy is symbolism or substance?

In terms of participation, the National Forest Strategy provides an outstanding example of inclusion and network creation. Participation was a problem in Europe, since many European countries had decades and generations of top-down forest policy and forest management. They could not, overnight, invent a participatory and inclusive process, which is what they were being asked to do. With the best will in the world, they could not get people involved in the way that we have managed to get people involved in the National Forest Strategy. For example, in Paris I spoke to French civil servants involved in setting up their NFP. They said, look, for years forest policy in France has worked by us telling people what to do. Sometimes they do it and sometimes they don't, but that's the way it's done. Now we go and ask them what they want, and they think it's a trick. That's the problem that Canadians don't have. Here, the National Forest Strategy is a shining model of how to do this and how to do it right. If you look at the evolution of the Strategy from its early days in 1981, you can see through the actual language that's used, the way that we've moved from talking about public awareness, educating people in a kind of top-down and rather condescending way, to the idea of involvement in forest policymaking. We have developed, in interesting ways, the policy-broking and learning function that NFPs are trying to create. However, can the National Forest Strategy remain a consensus-orientated document, and can we continue to have this extraordinary level of participation without succumbing to "elephantiasis?" That is, the tendency of the Strategy to expand to include more and more things that people who have been brought into the Strategy want.

Collaboration and conflict resolution – the National Forest Strategy is collaborative but is unclear whether it actually resolves conflict. This is something that the Europeans look at very closely. Collaboration for them was a means of conflict resolution in forest policymaking. For

us, of course, we have the framework of federal and provincial jurisdictions, and the fact that conflicts arise within provincial jurisdiction and successful conflict resolution, at least in the literature that I'm aware of, is usually local. Experiences with province-wide conflict resolution processes in Canada have not been especially promising. To think that a national strategy could engage in this kind of conflict resolution is, perhaps, over ambitious. My question is then, can the National Forest Strategy address what I see as the Canadian problem here, collaboration that is very wide but not particularly deep. There is a danger that the sorts of things that the collaboration can achieve is actually relatively limited but very large numbers of people are brought into the collaboration.

The National Forest Strategy is clearly iterative, has regular evaluations, promotes learning, provides very important support for criteria and indicators, and provincial initiatives and objective-driven management. This is something that the Europeans are also very good at and something that through their own processes have developed very well. The National Forest Strategy should continue doing what it does to support the CCFM. However, I'm a little confused about the relation here between a vision, a policy and a plan. Can a national strategy ever be, should it even be, a forest planning tool in Canada in the way that the Europeans seem to think that their NFP is going to be the sort of "cap-stone" of the planning process in their countries?

Finally, coordination. Coordination is arguably the critical function of an NFP in a decentralized forest policy system like we have. However, some have noted the tendency of recent Strategies to become catalogues of relatively unrelated initiatives. People come to the table with things that they are doing, and these are included in the Strategy, but the coordination between them seems to be lacking. That coordination is actually performed, of course, to the extent that it is performed at all, by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM). My question is whether it is time to re-examine the arms-length relationship between the CCFM and the National Forest Strategy if we want to move in this direction of a European-style NFP. If we do, should we be seeing a closer relationship in which we ask the Ministers to do more to coordinate the Strategy itself.

To conclude, I've produced a report card on the National Forest Strategy as an NFP. On participation, my evaluation is that the Strategy is outstanding, and a more proactive role in showing others how it's done needs to be taken. This is part of the Strategy that could certainly be used as role model for other parts of the world. In collaboration, well as I say, it seems out of its depth with the big boys – should we even be trying to do this? Collaboration and conflict resolution doesn't seem to be something that could be done by a Strategy in Canada. Iterative planning – good work here, but we always need to remember that we must lead by example. We can't tell anybody what to do, and I sense sometimes a frustration about that. Coordination – must try harder.

Is the Canadian model exportable? There are elements that are exportable, but I want to suggest that there are some fundamental assumptions which we take for granted here in Canada which may not be true in other countries to which we may want to export this model. Here in Canada we have a well-organized and energetic civil society. We've had twenty years or more, as I mentioned at the onset, of intelligent involvement in forest policy. We have recognition by

governments, and this is a good thing and not a threat to their authority. This is not true in many countries around the world. We have clearly defined legal structures and informal dispute resolution mechanisms. This is not necessarily true in many other countries. We have made significant progress in certification, in criteria and indicators and other new instruments which support sustainable forest management. Again, not necessarily true in other countries around the world. The relatively weak coordination that comes from the model in Canada is, of course, compensated for by capacity elsewhere in the system – to coordinate at the provincial level in Canada. This is not necessarily true in other countries.

I leave you then, just as a reminder, with the four questions that I pose about the National Forest Strategy. Can the Strategy remain consensus oriented without succumbing to elephantiasis? Can the Strategy address the Canadian problem of collaboration that is wide but not deep? Can a “national strategy” ever be a forest-planning tool in Canada? Should it be? Is it time to re-examine the arms-length relationship between the CCFM and the Strategy?