

**Presentation to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development,  
Ottawa, April 3, 2012, by Monte Hummel, Chair, Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement.**

Mr. Chairman, Committee members,

Thank you for inviting the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement (CBFA) to appear before you today to contribute to your study on the development of a National Conservation Plan for Canada.

There are many aspects of this plan which deserve our comment, but in a ten-minute oral presentation I have decided to focus on just two:

- 1) That the conservation initiatives included in the plan contribute **economically** as well as ecologically to our country, and
- 2) That the **leadership and implementation** of this initiative be **shared** by the federal government with others, especially the private sector, non government organizations (NGOs), the provinces and aboriginal leaders.

**The CBFA**

To help you understand why these two points are priorities for us, let me first say a few words about the CBFA which I now chair...

This agreement was formally signed in May 2010, so our second anniversary is coming up next month. It covers about 75 million ha, which constitutes 80% of the licensed boreal forests of Canada, and as such is by far the largest forest conservation agreement in the world—absolutely unique to Canada. It includes 23 of Canada’s largest forest companies through the Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC), and 9 leading NGOs. Both sides had previously been at war for decades.

Together these signatories agreed to: defer industrial activity on nearly 30 million ha to allow time to develop plans to conserve woodland caribou; to cease hostilities in the international marketplace; to deploy the best forest management practices in the world on that part of the forest that **would** be harvested; and most important, to actually accomplish more working **together** rather than apart.

**1) Economic as well as Ecological Benefits**

Although much attention has been paid to the first three goals of our Agreement dealing with **conservation** objectives regarding best practices, protected areas, and species at risk, of equal importance is the **economic** content of Goals 5 and 6, which are designed to achieve:

- “5) Improved prosperity of the Canadian forest sector and the communities that depend on it;
- 6) Recognition by the marketplace (e.g. customers, investors, consumers) of the CBFA and its implementation in ways that demonstrably benefit FPAC members and their products from the boreal.”

First, I want to make the point that Canadian conservationists, and a Canadian conservation plan, must be capable of embracing both biodiversity and economic prosperity. In fact, it is much easier to make progress on one if proper attention is always paid to the other.

Furthermore, practically speaking, it is always more difficult to convince governments to take action on conservation measures if they think such measures represent an economic net loss.

Environmentalists are fond of demanding that economic development interests take into consideration the environmental consequences of their operations. Rightly so, and I believe most companies now do this... either because they have to, or because it is a genuine part of their corporate culture, or both.

But the CBFA also represents the reverse proposition, namely a sincere effort to make sure that environmental initiatives provide economic benefits. Because it is not a sin to want a job. And being a logger, or miner, or farmer, or hunter, or commercial fisherman, does not make you the environmental devil incarnate. Rather, these folks can and should be natural allies in conservation, because their very livelihoods depend on a sustainable or long term conservation approach to the natural resources upon which they depend. The fact that they **have** an economic interest should be harnessed as a powerful motivator for conservation.

We at CBFA therefore recommend that **both economic and ecological** principles should underlie a National Conservation Plan. And we believe that our Agreement is a living example that it can be done, through active collaboration rather than by lobbing media grenades at each other from a distance. It's not **easy**; but it **is** possible.

Further, most conservation proposals not only should, but **do** bring with them measureable economic benefits--a fact that is now acknowledged by leading Canadian businesses and government policy makers alike. The key, of course, is to value ecological services properly in any cost/benefit equation.

These principles obviously apply to the working land and waterscapes of Canada, which are an important focus for the CBFA and a National Conservation Plan. These **managed** areas can and must make an important contribution to bio-diversity conservation.

That said, please notice that protected areas are also important components of the CBFA, as they should be for a National Plan. Especially for Canada, which is rapidly becoming one of the last global reservoirs of true wilderness, from which we all ultimately derive. I predict that leaders who foresaw this fact during this decade, and took steps to protect large representative samples of our country in a natural state, will be seen by future generations as having saved something that became scarce in the world and unique to Canada. As such, I further predict that wilderness will have not only a resonant cultural and spiritual value, but a significant **economic** value far beyond what anyone now expects. Call it Canada's "natural competitive advantage" if you will, every bit as important as our industrial resources.

If I may add a personal note, I have had the privilege of working with this government and our current Prime Minister on the protected areas part of our country's conservation agenda, through substantial increases right across Canada, on land and water. Some of these were announced by Mr. Harper himself, such as the large extension to Nahanni National Park, and the establishment of a 1 million ha National Marine Conservation Area in western Lake Superior—the largest freshwater reserve in the world. This government also made the largest land withdrawal for conservation purposes ever in Canadian history—some 10 million ha of primarily boreal forest around Great Slave Lake. I hope the National Conservation Plan will build on this momentum.

Most of this work has been led by First Nations, whose treaty and constitutional rights must be respected throughout a National Plan. Conservation measures should be championed by the people most affected, not imposed, which only leads to a legacy of resentment and no real ownership. After all, it's **their** home, and **they** most of all should benefit both culturally and economically. Therefore, the CBFA tries to collaboratively engage Aboriginal communities wherever our work hits the ground.

Now I'll conclude briefly with the second major point of this submission....

## **2)Share the Leadership**

The most inspiring and productive conservation initiatives over the last 30 years in Canada were not dreamed-up and led up by governments, but by the non-government sector. Some examples are: the \$1.5 billion North American Waterfowl Management Plan led by Ducks Unlimited; the Endangered Spaces Campaign which resulted in over a thousand new conservation reserves—doubling the amount of protected area in Canada, led by WWF; the Natural Areas Conservation Plan on private land led by the Nature Conservancy of Canada; and,

I would argue, the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement, led by FPAC and NGOs who broke ranks with their peers in order to do things differently.

I'm not saying that governments haven't been, and are not, essential to the success of all these initiatives. Because they absolutely are. Governments, after all, have the legal authority to decide about the disposition of public lands and waters in over 90% of this country, and they can also greatly influence what happens on private land as well.

But the initial vision, ambition, enthusiasm, and intellectual capital—in other words the **leadership**—for these transformative initiatives came from outside government. Quite frankly, the people involved decided not to spend the next decade just complaining about insufficient action from governments, but instead to assume leadership **in partnership with** governments. This leadership recipe can capture the public imagination in a way that is difficult for strictly government-led initiatives. It can also bring substantial financial resources, technical expertise, marketing capability, and a communication network to the table, which is lighter on its feet and more third-party credible than what is normally available to governments.

We often say that conservation is too big a job for any one party to undertake, but we too rarely **act** on that fact. To be sure, it's important that each party do its job and deliver on its responsibilities—including the federal government. But if you really want it to make a difference, I urge you to share the leadership of developing and implementing a National Conservation Plan for Canada. This does more than just involve others as a courtesy; it makes those who should be, expressly **accountable for its success**.

You are giving every indication of wanting to do that, through these hearings, and through the initial multi-party roundtable meeting with Minister Kent. We at the CBFA are eager to constructively contribute whatever we can to an effective National Conservation Plan.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, I would now be pleased to respond to any questions the Committee might have.