

Ecology Action Centre MEDIA RELEASE
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Secret deal with Northern Pulp `seriously undermines` Western Crown Lands Consultation

Integrity of Crown land planning process now in question

A secret deal made with Northern Pulp last January will more than double the company's annual supply of wood from Crown land in Nova Scotia. The deal was made a month before the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) began the [Western Crown Lands Planning Process](#), a public consultation process to decide how to best use Crown lands in Western Nova Scotia – some of which Northern had already been given rights to harvest.

“That the Department of Natural Resources was arranging a wood supply deal with Northern Pulp while at the same time asking the public for their input on how these lands should be used undermines the very core purpose or rationale for conducting public consultations. News of this deal is a slap in the face to all those who participated in this so-called consultation, and will seriously undermine the outcome of the process” says Matt Miller, Forestry Coordinator at the Ecology Action Centre.

The increased allocation more than doubles Northern Pulp's current annual supply of wood from publicly-owned Crown land in Nova Scotia, from 100,000 tonnes a year to 225,000 tonnes annually. Northern Pulp will most likely want to operate within a large block of Crown land outside St Margaret's Bay for this additional allocation because it is the closest to their mill.

“Northern Pulp has overcut its own lands and Crown lands under its license in central Nova Scotia and now appears to have their sights set on Crown lands in St Margaret's Bay – and the Department of Natural Resources has already pulled the trigger for them” Miller says.

Community members who advocated for the government purchase of the former Bowater lands and who participated in the Western Crown

Lands consultation had hopes of establishing a community forest on Crown lands in the St Margaret's Bay area. Their proposal was turned down only months after this deal was signed.

“Hundreds of citizens and organizations fought for two years to get the former Bowater-Mersey lands wrested from multi-national control and returned to Nova Scotians. Once that was accomplished, DNR invited us to propose community forests. If giving these lands to Northern Pulp was already a done deal, the people of the Bay, indeed all Nova Scotians, were duped” says Geoff LeBoutillier, who led the Buy Back the Mersey movement and organized the St. Margaret's Bay Community Forest initiative.

“News of this secret deal only serves to further erode public trust in government's willingness and ability to manage Crown lands in a balanced way, and is further proof that the government is snubbing the publicly held values of Transparency, Accountability, Collaboration and Informed-Decision Making that were supposed to be the backbone of the new Natural Resources Strategy” says Miller.