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There are few topics in forestry that generate as much debate as Tenure Reform. This is true not only in Ontario, but in the rest of Canada as well where over 90% of the land is owned by the public.

Tenure essentially identifies the rights that companies have to the forests they have licenses on. For example, the tenure may guarantee a certain volume of a tree species each year.

There exist many forms of tenure today. From small tenures such as community forests on a few thousand hectares in British Columbia to proposed Cooperative Sustainable Forest Licenses (SFLs) of 4 million ha in Ontario. There are area-based tenures as well as volume-based tenures. Tenures on private land as well as combined tenures on both public and private land such as Tree Farm licenses.

In Ontario today, the tenure system has evolved from largely Crown-managed tenure to the current Sustainable Forest License (SFL) approach which is led by the forest industry. Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) still retains substantial control of forest management activities through the Crown Forest Sustainability Act and its associated regulations, policies and guidelines. Essentially, all of the commercial forest in Ontario today (outside of biomass) has been committed to one company or another. Furthermore, the SFLs are either led by single companies or by cooperatives that consist of all businesses that access fibre from the forest.

Despite this evolution over time, there is a substantial demand from many people in Ontario for change. The demand for change is coming from many different groups including smaller communities, First Nations, local governments and municipalities, and even some forest companies. In a never ending quest to establish an effective tenure system, the MNR is remaining open-minded to new ideas even though there is no formal process today to initiate change.

So what is the best proposal for new tenure in Ontario to satisfy the many interests across the province? I have personally worked within 10 different forms of tenure, each with different advantages and objectives. Based on this experience, I would suggest before deciding on a new tenure approach, it is important to clearly identify the objectives and problems to be solved before rushing into a new tenure model. Secondly I would suggest that perhaps we may have to consider more than one tenure system as issues are not the same across all areas of the province.

Some of the typical concerns I have heard include the following. In some areas, local communities would like a direct say in how forest management is done to ensure local control and benefits remain in the local community. Also, there are concerns with environmental stewardship and a belief that the current approaches do not adequately address these issues.

First Nations share these same issues as well. In addition, First Nations also believe that because of their inherent rights to the land and current status of treaties, they are more than just a stakeholder and have a connection to the land not defined by simple tenure. Indeed, current legal case law requires the government of Ontario to consult with local First Nations on land use in their traditional territories.

The people of Ontario, much like Canadians everywhere, value the vast areas of Crown forest that exist today. Most other countries do not have this unique situation as private fee simple land dominates the landscape. As a result, Canadians tend to want to have a balance of environmental and socio-economic

values from their forests. They want us to ensure long-term environmental health is not compromised by short-term economics. That said, Canadians clearly want a healthy economy that is respectful of communities, workers, and local First Nations. They want us to achieve all of this.

Then there is the industry. In this volatile economy, the industry is facing unprecedented challenges. Low-cost structures are needed as well as quality wood supplies that are stable and predictable over a long period of time. In addition, the industry requires a clear set of rules that do not change too frequently, and a resolution to the land claim and treaty issues of First Nations that does not shift excessive cost burdens to the industry. No longer can Ontario forest companies remain comfortable with the historic market in the United States. Reduced wood demand and increased supplies from other countries have fundamentally changed this primary market

Based on all of this, I would like to offer the following recommendations:

- When seeking input across Ontario, ensure the analysis of the input is summarized locally as well as provincially. This may identify unique local opportunities that may not apply everywhere.
- Learn from other jurisdictions such as New Zealand or Australia where there are still substantial components of Crown land and the forest industry is relatively successful.
- Explore a zoning concept within forests to minimize land use conflicts of conservation vs expanding wood supplies.
- Have an open discussion on whether or not directing all the commercial volumes is the best approach. Directed volumes offer stability for industry but may restrict innovation from new players and may not guarantee the most efficient businesses thrive in the future. In short, should some of the wood be available through some sort of a competitive bid process?
- Government should take a direct role in offering more benefits to local First Nations and not just rely on the industry to solve socio-economic opportunities.
- Consider small pilots for new tenure to test viability once all the issues have been clearly identified

In summary, the most important recommendation for tenure reform is to take the time to listen first to the issues before rushing into a new tenure system that may not work. If done correctly, we can address the many demands on our forest to ensure long term environmental health and socio-economic opportunities that are desirable for industry, local communities and First Nations.

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Al is currently the Chief Forester for Tembec in Ontario and lives in Timmins. His previous experience was primarily in British Columbia for 16 years as well as stops in Alberta and New Brunswick. While in B.C, his experience was varied including stints as a field engineer in coastal B.C, operations supervisor as well as Manager of an Innovative Forest Practices Agreement where the AAC was increased by 10% and environmental conservation was improved as well. We also pioneered a new approach to ecosystem mapping that was used for growth and yield programs and important wildlife values determination. He also spent time working on productivity improvements in the sawmill for 2 years and as a Project Manager for a large sawmill equipment manufacturer. He graduated from UNB in 1990 and is registered as an RPF and P.Eng here in Ontario. He has been married for 17 years to his wife Susan with two children 12 (Emily) and 8 years old (Joe). **Email:** alan.thorne@tembec.com. Bio from <http://www.forestresearch.ca/aboutus/Staff/althorne.html>.