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Midhurst, ON L0L 1X0

705 725-7500

April 30, 2003

Mr. Terry Walton
President, Huronia Loggers Association
1515 Glengarry Landing Road, South
RR 1
Minesing, ON L0L 1Y0

Dear Mr. Walton:

Thank you for your letter of March 4th, 2003 regarding possible access to Crown Land for timber harvesting. Firstly, please accept my apologies for this delayed response. Our District Forester is currently on an extended leave and it was therefore necessary to consult with our forestry staff at our Main Office in Peterborough before replying to you.

Legislation, Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines direct MNR activities. With regards to timber harvesting on Crown Land, the Crown Forest Sustainability Act (CFSA) and Environmental Assessment Act are both applicable.

In essence, these pieces of legislation require MNR to undertake a Land Use Planning process, including a thorough public consultation component, prior to any land use decisions being made, including timber harvesting. Many of the existing Crown Land Use plans across the south are out of date, while others are completely lacking. At the same time, with an increased population, public use of these lands has increased in recent years both in terms of intensity and variety of uses. Many new uses are well established since the last Land Use Plans were prepared, and some former uses may no longer be deemed to be compatible or appropriate given these changes. Any land use planning exercise would be virtually certain to generate significant public interest, which may result in a curtailment of some uses that have been deemed as acceptable in the past.

In addition, assuming that forest harvesting was deemed to be an acceptable use at the end of the planning exercise, an appropriate Forest Management Plan would have to be developed to ensure sustainable harvest levels using appropriate silvicultural guidelines. According to the CFSA, any crown timber that was made available would have to be allocated using a competitive process.

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In northern Ontario, the forest industry has taken on many of the responsibilities associated with these changes in business practices on Crown Land, and in some cases, this has significantly raised the cost of wood production. It is likely that the forest industry in southern Ontario would experience similar increases in costs.

The Environmental Assessment process alone would likely take several years to complete, and would offer no guarantees that forest harvesting would end up being one of the compatible uses of any particular property. Also, unlike northern Ontario, where a Class Environmental Assessment was undertaken for forest management on all Crown Lands, individual Environmental Assessments would likely be required for each piece of Crown Land due to the unique social, cultural, economic and environmental values associated with each one. Such an undertaking would represent a formidable task, and is beyond the scope and capacity of any one District of MNR to deal with on its own.

Again, thank you for writing.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Glenn Price".

Glenn Price
District Manager
Midhurst District