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EAC applauds regulatory change for Biomass Plant, calls for shutdown of Port Hawkesbury Biomass Plant by 2018.

K' JIPUKTUK (Halifax) – The Ecology Action Centre is applauding the provincial government's recent decision to remove the outrageous "must run" regulation for the Port Hawkesbury Biomass Plant.

"This is a good and necessary first step in addressing the issue of forest biomass" says EAC Wilderness Coordinator Raymond Plourde. "To call it "green energy" is a fundamentally fraudulent claim. There is nothing environmentally friendly about cutting down and burning our forests to generate highly expensive and terribly inefficient electricity. Primary harvesting for forest biomass does nothing to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, is adding significant damage to our already highly stressed forest ecosystems and it needs to be dialed way back".

The use of forest biomass for energy production was originally sold to Nova Scotians as a good use of so-called "waste wood" – sawdust and bark and other leftover material from sawmills. But instead, Nova Scotia has seen the rise of a new wave of large-scale clearcutting – or "primary harvesting" - to feed big biomass electricity plants both here and abroad.

The Centre is calling on the government to finish the job by:

- Removing primary forest biomass from the official list of renewable energy sources.
- Restrict the practice of "primary" forest harvesting for biomass for electricity generation and prohibit the export of forest biomass for electricity generation in other countries.
- Make a plan to decommission the Port Hawkesbury biomass plant in 2018 when renewable energy from Muskrat Falls comes online.

"This huge new consumptive pressure on our forests is threatening the viability of the value-added hardwood industry, driving up firewood prices and driving down forest harvesting practices to a new low" says EAC Forestry Coordinator Matt Miller. " To address the threat that biomass harvesting poses to the health of Nova Scotia's forests, we need to improve the regulatory framework for forest harvesting to significantly reduce clearcutting and eliminate harvesting of tree tops and branches for biomass"



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“Research shows the amount of carbon pollution associated with electricity generated from primary forest biomass is similar to pollution from burning coal,” says Catherine Abreu, EAC Energy Coordinator. “We have the perfect opportunity coming up in 2018, when renewable energy will start flowing from Muskrat Falls, to finish the job and shut the Port Hawkesbury Biomass plant down.”

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In 2010 an exhaustive expert panel review of natural resources management in Nova Scotia, chaired by the late Honourable Chief Justice Constance Glube, had this to say about biomass:

“The panel strongly urges great caution in any decision by government to approve use of biomass for power generation. There is ample evidence that our forests are already under considerable stress. Despite the need to reduce greenhouse gases, Nova Scotia does not have the wood capacity for biomass use to make much of a difference even provincially. It is counter-intuitive for the province to protect the environment by cutting down too many trees or reducing the quality of already thin and acidic soils. The province should instead encourage the exploration and expansion of other sustainable methods to generate power and, at the same time, methods to conserve energy and reduce demand.”

Chief Justice Glube was equally unblinking about our overall approach to natural resource management, particularly forestry practices:

“The status quo is not an option. Unless there is change, Nova Scotia's natural resources will continue to be destroyed.”

http://novascotia.ca/natr/strategy/pdf/phase2-reports/Steering%20Panel_FINAL.pdf

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