

Private woodlots, she said, account for 30 per cent of all of the province's forests and the silviculture program pays to hire people to do things such as tree thinning. The silviculture program ensures forests remain healthy and continue to grow for future harvests, adds to the provincial economy and the GDP.

O'Donnell said harvesting volumes are up over the last two years which, she said, is positive after the 2008 down turn in the sector.

"Now is not the time to be cutting silviculture funding, but rather a time when increased investment is necessary to ensure that there is a continuous supply of high quality wood into the future," she said.

In a written statement, the Department of Energy and Resource Development said it's important for everyone to do whatever they can to ensure the sustainability and competitiveness of the province's forestry sector.

"Our department continues to look for new ways to improve the private silviculture program. We're looking at things like multi-year budgeting, cost-sharing, industry partnerships and administrative efficiency to make sure the budget goes as far as possible to get the most benefit out of the program. We are trying to do more without spending more," the statement said.

The YSC forest products marketing board is asking provincial residents to get involved.

"We want people to contact their MLAs and express the importance of the silviculture money," O'Donnell said.

Susannah Banks, manager of the New Brunswick Federation of Woodlot Owners, which represents all 42,000 woodlot owners in the province, said Friday the federation is deeply disappointed in the reduction in funding.

"It has resulted in loss of employment for people working in the silviculture industry and once they go, once they don't get enough work it is really hard to get them back," she said.

Those workers either find other jobs or leave the province to find work, she said.

One of the problems with cutting silviculture funding is the work is spread over more than one year, said Banks.

"If you prepared the ground last year for planting, and you've committed to your trees, you have to buy your trees and you have to plant your trees," she

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CARL URQUHART

is saying funds are limited and adjustments need to be made everywhere, he said.

"We'll continue (to lobby) and hopefully at some point get it reversed," said Maillet.

PC MLA Carl Urquhart said cutting \$1 million from the silviculture program will negatively impact the province's economy through job loses and the future growth of trees on private woodlots, which he said are needed as part of the provincial forest industry.

On Nov. 17 he made a motion in the Legislature that the \$1 million funding cut should be reinstated.

"It was an embarrassment when we debated it. They [the provincial government] said the marketing boards could learn to manage the funding better," he said.

He said he's frustrated that Energy and Natural Resources Minister Rick Doucet doesn't see the need for this funding reinstatement.

"I think the government needs to increase the funding back up to a minimum of \$6 million," he said.

(With files by staff writer Stephen Llewellyn)