



Royal Commission
on the Northern
Environment

Manulife Centre
55 Bloor Street West
Room 801
Toronto M4W 1A5
965-9286

STATEMENT BY

J.E.J. FAHLGREN, CHAIRMAN

ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE NORTHERN ENVIRONMENT

FOR RELEASE

November 9, 1979

The reaction to the purchase of Reed Ltd.'s forest products assets in Dryden appears to be favourable in Northwestern Ontario. Dryden has faced economic uncertainty for some time, and the news of the Great Lakes' offer to purchase stirs confidence in the future and promises greater stability.

In a public statement the President of Great Lakes Forest Products Limited, Charles Carter, indicated that discussions are underway with the province of Ontario for the additional timber limits required to meet the planned expansion of the Dryden mill.

I am not in a position to comment or speculate on any negotiations that may be taking place for further timber limits.

However, I will say this. The development of a large tract of forest north of the 50th parallel would have significant economic, social and environmental effects on the region. Examining the beneficial or adverse effects of major enterprises in the north is the mandate of this Commission. It is also the job of my Commission to find ways to involve northerners in decision-making on such developments, and to find ways to ensure that the affected residents will benefit from such developments.

Therefore, it is my view that before any new large timber licenses north of 50° are granted, the project should be subject to environmental assessments and hearings under the provisions of the Environmental Assessment Act, which, at present, is the best instrument available for the task. Designation under the Act would provide for public participation and for consideration of such matters as buffer zones around existing municipal or reserve boundaries, preservation of areas of ecological sensitivity, and training and employment of local people in the project.

I want to assure the Government and the people of Ontario that this Commission will be following these developments very closely. The Commission is fully prepared to give early or special attention to any new development which requires examination.

I sincerely hope and expect that the Government of Ontario and Great Lakes Forest Products Limited will share these views and the aspirations of northerners in this endeavour.