

NEWS



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A lot of wood

Opposition leader wonders why Harbour Grace company earned wood allocation and operating permit

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The Compass

A Harbour Grace company at the centre of a controversial wood-cutting permit has made several political donations to Newfoundland politicians over the last few provincial elections.

Earlier this fall, Paul Garland Forest Products, based in Harbour Grace, was awarded a wood allocation and operating permit in District 5, including areas near Glovertown, Gambo and Eastport.

Liberal opposition leader Yvonne Jones issued a press release asking why the Harbour Grace company was awarded the contract and not one of five companies in the area who had asked for a permit.

"The issue is not with Paul Garland, the issue is with the department of natural resources, and the government in terms of how they handled this issue," said Yvonne Jones, leader of the Liberal opposition. "It could have been Paul Garland, it could have been any company anywhere in the province. The other piece of this is that District 5 is a huge forest area that includes a lot of the central area, a lot the area around Terra Nova. Forestry is a big industry down here and employs hundreds of people, and a lot of it is for export."

Jones said when the Abitibi Bowater mill closed in February, it left a lot of forest land that reverted back to provincial control, and there are other companies interested in getting the wood. But Jones said five local companies applied for permits and haven't received any.

Jones said local operators have raised concerns about political connections.

"This is not about Paul Garland not having wood here; it's about including the others who are trying to make a living, in this area as well, and that has not been done. And there is still wood allocation available, and it still has not been done."

Jones said people in the area are very concerned because forestry is their livelihood.

"Right now, they're seeing wood leaving, being used elsewhere, and that's fine, it's still in the province," she said. "But at the same time, they don't have that privilege."

Jones wrote a letter to Natural Resources Minister Kathy Dunderdale, but has not received a reply.

But according to provincial documents, a Paul Garland from Harbour Grace donated \$1,000 to Jerome Kennedy of the Progressive Conservatives during the 2007 provincial election campaign. For the 2003 election, Paul Garland Forest Products Ltd. is listed as having donated \$1,000 to PC party executive John Babb, \$500 to Liberal Roland Butler, the MHA of Port de Grave. During the 1999 election, Paul Garland Forest Products donated \$500 to Liberal John Efford. Efford was later elected to the House of Commons in a byelection in 2002 and became Paul Martin's natural resources minister.

In a 2001 provincial byelection for Port de Grave, Paul Garland Forest Products donated \$300 each to Roland Butler of the Liberals and Ed Neil of the PCs.

In 1997, Paul Garland Forest Products donated \$950 to the Liberal Party.

15/12/09

Paul Garland did not return phone calls left at Paul Garland Forest Products requesting comment.

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