

UBC report chops at 'unscientific' compromise on Clayoquot clearcut

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with Canadian Press

The so-called Clayoquot compromise of logging and parks announced by the provincial government a year ago was not based on science, according to a new University of B.C. report.

"It had much more to do with maintaining investor confidence in MacMillan Bloedel than any kind of careful scientific review," said the report's author, Gordon Brent Ingram.

"Unless they admit that, I think it's going to haunt them until they lose the next election.

Ingram, an assistant professor in UBC's forest resources management department, issued his report as environmental groups marked the first anniversary of the Clayoquot compromise with demonstrations in Canada and abroad.

A year ago Wednesday, Premier Mike Harcourt stood on a hilltop in Clayoquot Sound on western Vancouver Island to announce the government would protect about one-third of the area's temperate old-growth rain forest.

The rest would be open to some form of logging, although the size of clearcuts would be reduced and other restrictions would apply.

The decision, coming after years of wrangling, angered environmentalists, most of whom want the entire area preserved.

More than 850 people have been arrested while protesting the decision, most of them for blocking a logging road into the sound.

Fewer than 100 people rallied Wednesday in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery, where Greenpeace's Tzaporah Berman urged the crowd to write Prime Minister Jean Chretien and Environment Minister Sheila Copps to demand an end to clearcut logging.

"Clearcutting is fundamentally a liquidation of the old-growth forest in British Columbia and across Canada," Berman said. "It is not forest management."

But in Ottawa, Adriane Carr of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee gave a petition with more than

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120,000 signatures to Environment Minister Sheila Copps, the deputy prime minister.

In Victoria, about 80 protesters blocked one of the city's busiest downtown intersections to perform a piece of anti-logging street theatre as frustrated drivers looked on.

Activists also climbed to the roof of the landmark Bank of Montreal building nearby and unfurled a banner that said Clearcutting Clayoquot Still Not Sound.

"It was a big success," said organizer Ken Parker. "We raised some awareness and everyone stayed peaceful."

The Friends of Clayoquot Sound said in a news release, protests were also held in Britain, Germany, Russia, New Zealand, the United States, Japan and Australia.

In Sydney, protesters climbed a 70-metre pole on the waterfront and unfurled an anti-logging banner near where a shipment of Canadian lumber was being unloaded.

Last July, then-Opposition leader Jean Chretien wrote that a Liberal government would "initiate talks with the premier of British Columbia with the goal of bring Clayoquot Sound under federal protection, as an extension of Pacific Rim National Park."

Copps and Chretien have failed to date to keep that pre-election promise.

Said Carr: "Unfortunately, Ms. Copps gave me the impression that,

at this time, there is not enough public pressure on the federal government for it to do something about Clayoquot Sound.

"I find it amazing given the growing international pressure and growing movement to end clearcut logging that she does not feel the pressure."

By coincidence, a *Biodiversity in British Columbia* report, published by Environment Canada and made public this week, warns that clearcut logging is eliminating the old-growth forests needed by endangered species such as the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet. (*The Vancouver Sun* is publishing more stories about the report this Saturday, in the Insight section.)

Ingram, meanwhile, said his report attacking the scientific basis for the Clayoquot decision, will be sent to the European Parliament.

According to Ingram, the body of research done on the Clayoquot region on the west coast of Vancouver Island before cabinet's decision is lacking when compared to most other efforts to preserve old-growth forests in developed countries.

Clayoquot Sound ecosystems and a host of its species have not been adequately inventoried or mapped, he wrote.

Ingram also found that the 34 per cent of the region where logging is banned is "mostly muskeg, bog and trees that are one or two metres high" — not marketable timber.

Scott Alexander, media relations manager for MacMillan Bloedel, responded with a broad slam against academic reports that aren't scrutinized by experts in the same field before they are made public.

"I would have thought that something as important as that would have been peer reviewed, but clearly this fellow is doing it out of the goodness of his heart," Alexander said.

Of Wednesday's demonstrations against the Clayoquot decision, Alexander said: "I wish we'd have been invited, because we would have celebrated, too. It's a marvellous decision — one of the best far-reaching land-use decisions this province has ever seen."