

## Project Overview

The sustainability of Manitoba's forests, the communities, and wildlife within them is paramount. In December 2019, the Minister of Conservation and Climate requested that the Clean Environment Commission (CEC) conduct a review of Manitoba's existing two-track forest management plan approval process and develop recommendations for a single approval process that would meet the requirements of The Environment Act and The Forest Act.

The CEC is an arms-length provincial government agency that can review any potential environmental impacts presented by proposed developments at request by the Minister responsible for The Environment Act.

The CEC reviewed Manitoba's Forest Management Plan (FMP) approval processes and completed a jurisdictional scan of other provinces across Canada. The report outlines their findings and recommends a path forward to eliminate the duplication within the approval process. These recommendations are for the Minister of Conservation and Climate to consider.

## Engagement Overview

A survey was open from September 25 to November 9, 2020 asking for feedback on the recommendations within the CEC's Report.

The survey asked the public questions on the recommendations from the CEC Report. Additionally, the survey asked questions regarding the factors that should be included within the new process.

In addition to the EngageMB survey, the Manitoba government arranged two public webinars held on September 9 and 17, 2020. The webinars were hosted by the CEC to provide further opportunity to the public to understand details on the report and solicit feedback.

Letters were sent to Indigenous communities, stakeholders, and non-governmental organizations in August 2020 indicating that public webinars and this public survey were available to provide feedback on the CEC's report.

## What We Heard

From September 25, 2020 to November 9, 2020, 50 individuals provided feedback on the CEC Report on the Forest Management Plan Approval Process survey. The participants included:

- Members of the general public.
- Forest Industry employees.
- Representatives of a stakeholder group or non-governmental organization.
- Representatives of an Indigenous community or organization.
- Forest industry corporate representatives.
- Small business owners directly related to the forest industry.

Of the 50 individuals that participated in the EngageMB survey, 50 per cent indicated that they had moderate to significant experience with the current FMP approval process, while the remaining 50 per cent had limited to no experience.

### Key Results

Results indicate that 48 per cent of participants indicated that their experience with the forest management plan approval process would be improved by a single approval process that maintains the standards of both The Environment Act and The Forestry Act. Figure 1 outlines how all survey participants provided feedback on this question.

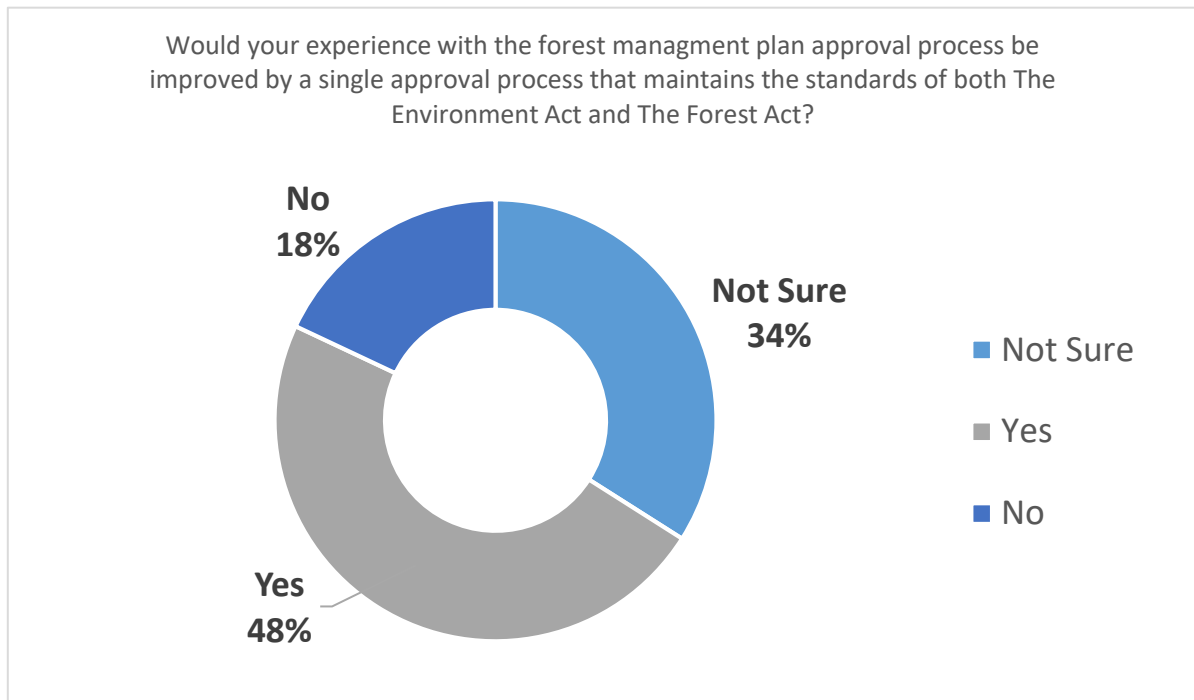


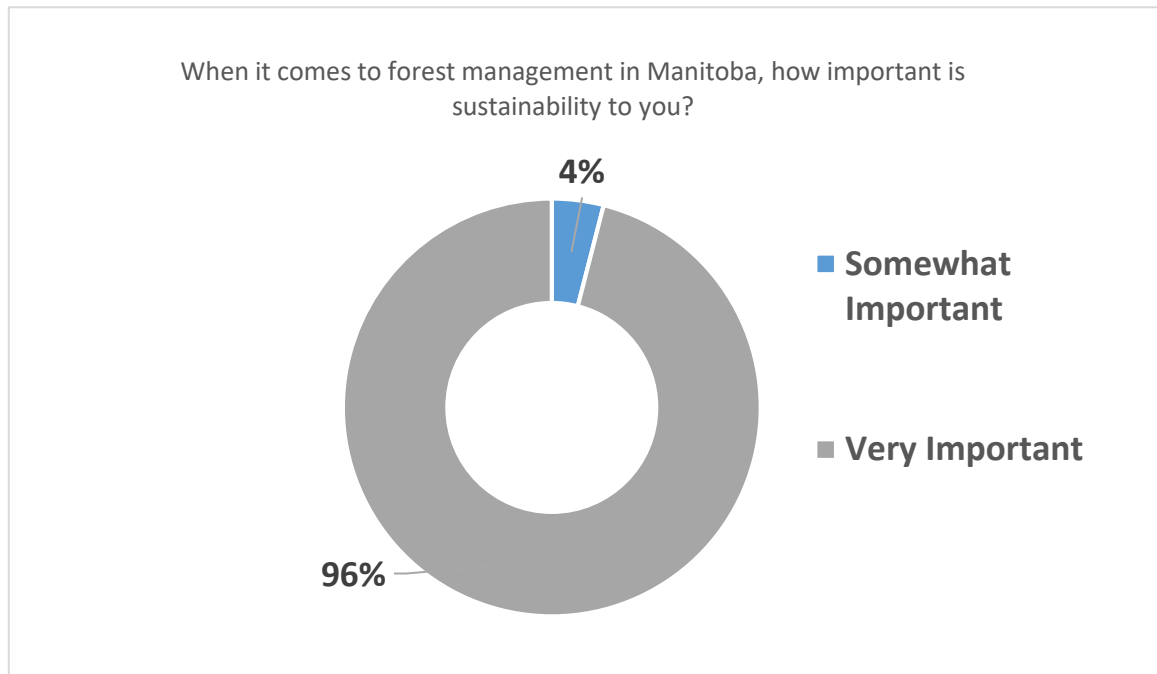
Figure 1. Survey results to proposed streamlined forest management approval process

The EngageMB survey asked participants to provide feedback on factors that they considered most important to forest management in Manitoba that should be included in a streamlined forest management approval process. These factors can be divided between four main themes: sustainability, economic opportunities, transparency, and stakeholder engagement.

#### Sustainability

Sustainable development of Manitoba's natural resources, including forests, is a priority of the Manitoba government. Manitoba forests make up about 26.3 million hectares of the province's 54.8 million hectare land base. Manitoba's Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan outlines the provincial government's commitment to preserving our forested land base.

Forest management practices and guidelines consider the important role that forests and their ecosystems play in sustainability within Manitoba. Figure 2 outlines how survey participants ranked the importance of sustainability in forest management plans.



*Figure 2. Results on the importance of sustainability*

- 96 per cent of participants valued sustainability as very important. Within the category of sustainability,
- 90 per cent identified impacts to wildlife as very important,
- 88 per cent identified impacts to watersheds and water quality as very important,
- 76 per cent identified air quality and cumulative effects as very important
- 68 per cent identified climate change as very important.

Other factors that were raised by survey participants is resiliency against wildfire threats.

#### Economic Opportunity

Economic opportunity was identified as very important by 40 per cent of participants, with 32 per cent identifying rural development as very important, and 26 per cent identifying Indigenous economic opportunity as very important. Figure 3 outlines how survey participants ranked the importance of economic opportunity in forest management plans.

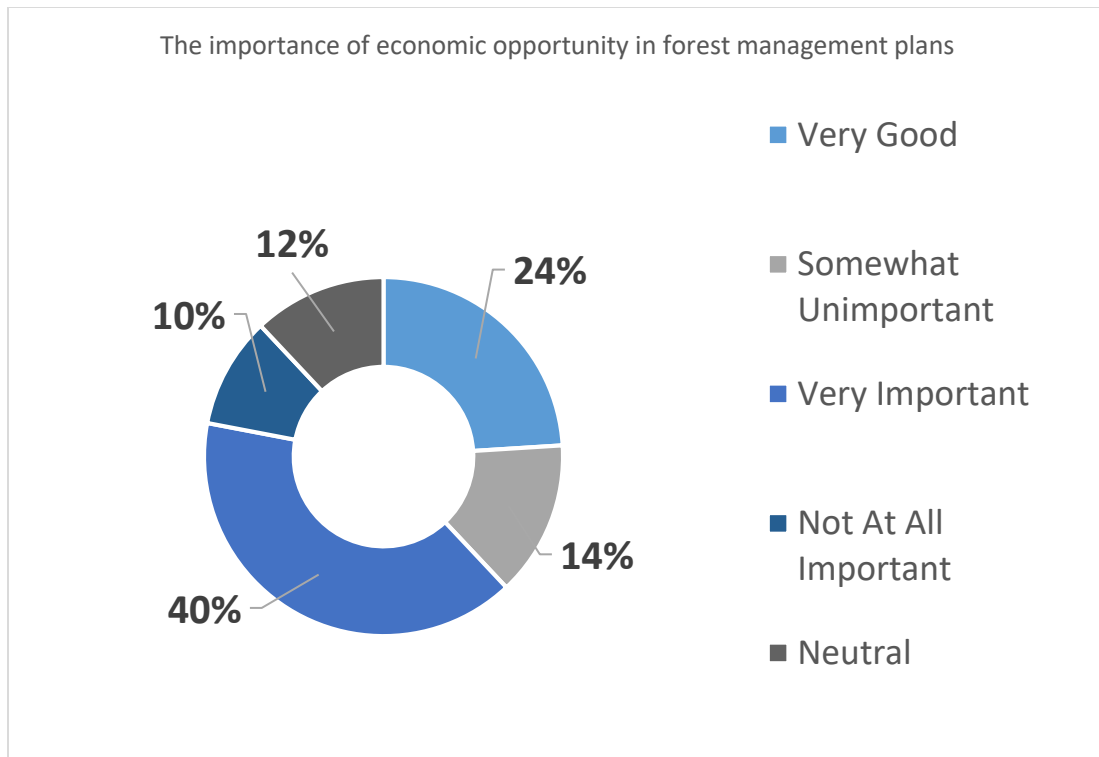


Figure 3. Results on the importance of economic opportunity

These results demonstrate that survey participants value sustainability at a higher value than economic opportunity. Currently, forest inventories within Forest Management Units are analyzed to determine allowable harvest limits of softwood and hardwood tree species within each area. The FMP approval process considers this information when providing licences to industry to ensure that economic opportunities are balanced with sustainability.

### Transparency

The EngageMB survey asked participants to provide feedback on the transparency of the current FMP approval process and accompanying legislation. All documents related to The Environment Act licences for forest management plans are placed in the public registries.

- 48 per cent of individuals stated that transparency within the current forest management plan approval process in Manitoba was poor or very poor.
- 18 per cent indicated that transparency was good or very good.
- 34 per cent were neutral.
- 40 percent indicated that transparency surrounding the current requirements for forest management approval as required by The Environment Act was poor or very poor.
- 28 per cent stating that transparency was good or very good.
- 32 per cent were neutral.

Feedback regarding the Forest Act was similar with

- 40 per cent indicating that transparency was poor to very poor.
- 20 per cent indicated that it was good or very good.
- 40 per cent were neutral.

The CEC recommended a number of ways to increase public transparency. Individuals were asked to rate how transparency could be improved. Figure 4 demonstrates that 92 per cent of participants stated that it was very important or somewhat important for the public to be notified of a proposed forest management plan preparation and be provided an opportunity for comment throughout the approval process.

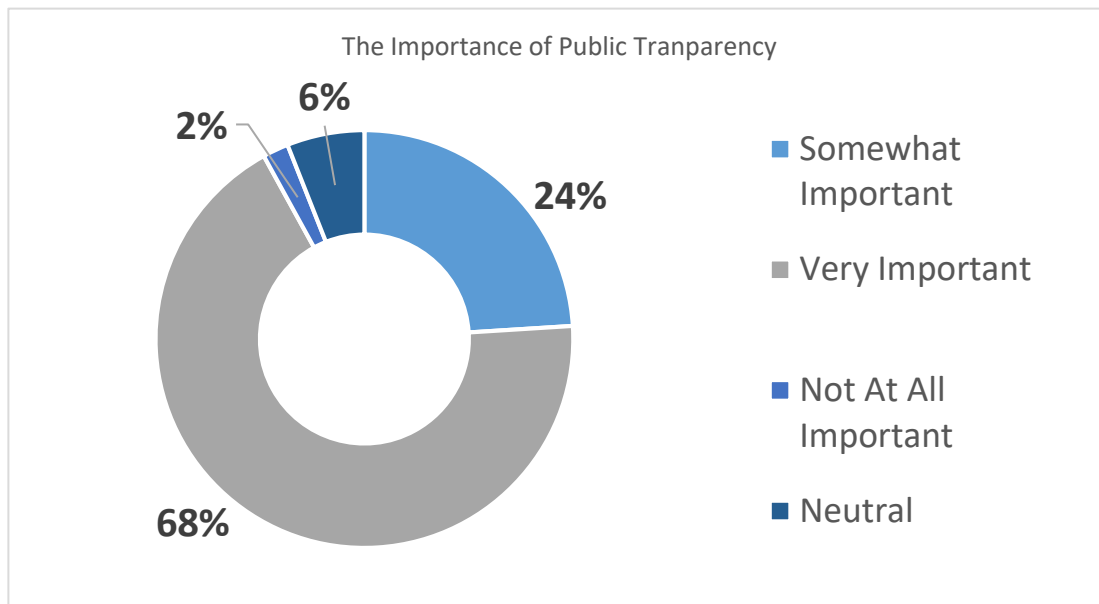


Figure 4. Results on the importance of public transparency

Public transparency includes posting any amendments online for public viewing, which 90 per cent of participants identified as very or somewhat important. Participants also indicated support for posting Third Party Audits as well as all required reports, with 90 per cent and 96 per cent indicating that this transparency is very important or somewhat important respectively. 86 per cent of participants indicated that the public should have an opportunity to provide input on major amendments to a forest management plan.

#### Stakeholder Engagement

The CEC recommended public engagement continue throughout the development of forest management plans. The survey asked for feedback from participants about how public engagement should be incorporated into this process moving forward. Figure 5 outlines the tools that participants indicated could best advance this communication.

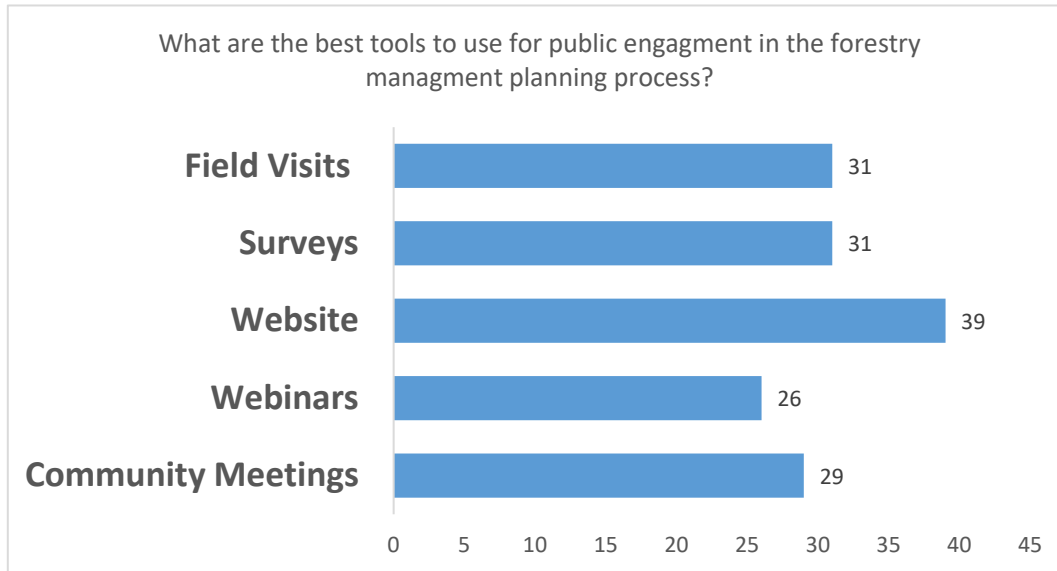


Figure 5. Results on the best tools for public engagement

### Engagement and Communication

The survey asked participants to identify how proponent engagement with local communities, Indigenous communities and stakeholder groups could be improved moving forward.

### Proponent Indigenous Engagement

Participants indicated that consistent and more opportunities for engagement throughout the approval process would improve the engagement. Ideas included:

- Public advisory committees that have membership from Indigenous communities,
- Community visits
- Increased and consistent communication.

Additionally, participants suggested that Indigenous communities are more directly asked what type of engagement is mutually beneficial.

### Proponent Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Participants indicated that transparency, public forums and early notification would improve engagement. Participants also suggested youth engagement, having feedback sessions and having opportunities for communities to visit forest operations to build knowledge of the industry and its impact on local communities.

## Other Recommendations

### Policy and Guidelines

Currently there is no provincial forest strategy, or a policy statement on overall provincial forest management objectives. The report recommended the development of a publicly vetted provincial-level strategy that identifies upcoming forest management issues and opportunities. A total of 90 per cent of participants agreed with this recommendation.

A series of provincial guideline documents have been developed by Manitoba's Forest Practice Committee (FPC). These forest practice guidelines provide the forest industry with direction on a number of forest management planning and operational topics.

The CEC has recommended that these guidelines be revised to reflect greater clarity on the process. A total of 44 per cent of participants indicated that they are neutral on the effectiveness of these documents in their current form in providing the necessary guidance to forestry companies. An additional 32 per cent of participants indicated that current documents were good at providing the necessary guidance.

Of survey participants, 72 per cent indicated that forest management plans should be updated every five years.

### Forester Certification

Almost all jurisdictions in Canada have formal professional associations that certify individuals as having attained a standard of competence in forest management (education and work experience). The CEC has recommended that Manitoba consider establishing a similar professional certification association. 76 per cent of participants stated that a professional forester certification would increase their trust that Manitoba's forests are being well managed.

### Appeals

Currently, if an individual would like to appeal an Environment Act Licence issued, that person has 30 days from the date the Licence is issued to appeal the decision of the Director to the Minister. The CEC is recommending a public dispute reconciliation mechanism be put in place instead of an appeal mechanism to the Minister. Results showed that 52 per cent of the participants strongly agreed or agreed with this recommendation with 30 per cent of participants being neutral on this recommendation.

## Next Steps

Manitoba will consider the results of the EngageMB survey on the CEC's Report on the Forest Management Plan Approval Process and other feedback received to determine next steps.

## Questions?

Please contact [EABDirector@gov.mb.ca](mailto:EABDirector@gov.mb.ca) with any questions or concerns.