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change that, but there are no legal requirements or standards established for what is needed for regeneration.

"For example, they don't have to regenerate the same species originally found on a site," explains Gray.

But Hnatiuk says getting logging companies to plant the trees will lead to increased sustainability.

"The funds collected through stumpage fees will go directly, and specifically for regeneration. Each Forest Management Area will have a fund unto itself. These funds will be managed and audited through independent trust companies," Hnatiuk explains.

"Previously, it was difficult to get funds because the Ministry of Natural Resources competes with the other ministries for its budget, and regeneration doesn't have an immediate impact or result," she says.

Another area of concern is how land will be set aside for protection and native land claim settlements.

"The current wording of the act appears to constrain the ability of the Ontario government to settle aboriginal land claims, create new protected areas or recreational reserves, or to designate Crown land for other non-timber purposes," Gray says.

"Plans cannot be made for protection or for other non-logging purposes in areas where logging licences have been signed. Currently, virtually all of Ontario's public productive forests have been assigned to logging. Everything below Timmins could be swallowed up and disappear in less than five years."

Hnatiuk counters this. She says the ministry's work with local citizen committees is far from finished, and expresses an avid commitment to trying to accommodate all groups concerned.

"Communities will have input in deciding what values are important and will be emphasized in management," Hnatiuk says.

A final important issue is how forestry management and operations will be monitored. Who or what will keep a watchful eye over the loggers?

"Although public statements made by the minister said independent audits of government and forest industries would be included in the legislation, it has not happened," Gray says.

Professor Aird agrees.

"There is a need for independent analysis of Ontario's forests," Aird says.

According to the act, audits will be done from time to time, whereas Aird believes there should be annual independent audits on the status of the forests.

However, despite the criticism, there is some optimism among involved individuals and groups.

"I think the thrust is in the right direction," Aird says. "Everyone agrees that we should go ahead and create a new act. We should support changing this [legislation] to the point where it is acceptable."

U of T's Puttock feels this proposed legislation will advance Ontario along the road to full sustainable forestry.

"The old Crown Timber Act is now over 20 years old, and is outdated. It essentially treated forests as a source of timber, and as the only value that was worth managing," Puttock says.

"My sense is this is a step forward. It's important to have that kind of legislation in place. But I still think we've got farther to go until we can say we're really managing our forests on a sustainable basis," continues Puttock.

Winter says the Conservation Council of Ontario welcomes the opportunity for change in the act, but still questions the tactics of the government.

"There is a will to change in the ministry but it's difficult to turn around the whole bureaucracy, and it can't be done in two months," he says.

"We have a great act here," Hnatiuk says. "As a package, we feel it will ensure we have forests in the future."

"We just won't have a forestry sector if we can't sustain them."

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