

During the last Federal Election, The Conservatives said they would stand up for Canada. Since being elected to a minority government they have done anything but. This has been most evident in the Yellowhead Riding. The Softwood Lumber dispute has been an ongoing battle since that last agreement expired in 2001. Since then the NAFTA Tribunal has repeatedly sided with Canada. The current agreement which was signed just before the final ruling was to come down. This agreement was suppose to give us peace in the industry for seven years but it has not lasted seven months, and has brought uncertainty in our communities. Susan Schwab, the US trade representative in a letter stated the BC and Alberta industries are violating the agreement by exceeding the quotas and calls for a reduction of shipments by five percent. Falling lumber prices in the United States has caused a fifteen percent export tax which is expected to last for years. Both the Canadian negotiator, Doug Wadell, and the US undersecretary of commerce, Grant Aldonas, whom negotiated have stated they think the agreement will likely not survive. Canadian Industry Leaders have said publicly their fortunes are worse since this agreement was signed. In a recent article in the Edmonton Journal, Trevor Wakelin, the director of fibre resources for Millar Western stated "It's a clear case of the US dictating forestry policy in Canada". The vice president of policy and planning for Weyerhaeuser, Paul Perkins stated that the federal government has considered the signing of the agreement as the end and has offered little help since.

The current agreement provides incentives for the shipping of raw logs for processing in the US. By not having them covered by the agreement and the 15% export duties, raw logs can be sent across the border for processing. Along with the logs, those jobs have also been sent south. Five thousand jobs have been lost so far. This government is not putting Canadian working families first.

The selling out of our communities shows that we have been BUSH-whacked by the Harper Conservatives and US forestry lobbyists. When commenting on Canada US relations in the November 13th of the Hill Times, Rob Merrifield said "I believe we'd better try erase the 49th parallel,..." Who is standing up for our communities and all Canadians in Ottawa? It is certainly not our current government.

Ken Kuzminski
Candidate for the Yellowhead NDP