



25 June 2014

Rt Hon John Key
Prime Minister
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON

Dear Mr Key

I am writing to express Labour's position on the Bill in relation to logging of native timber felled by the storm on the West Coast three months ago. I would appreciate your most urgent consideration on the points I raise given we have been advised by the Leader of the House that the proposal is to pass this Bill through all stages, under urgency, this week.

Labour is prepared to support the Bill but only on the basis of a number of amendments. We are puzzled by the need for urgency, given that three months have passed since the storm. We understand that an ordinary consideration of such legislation would mean the deterioration to unusable condition of the wind-blown beech trees. We are willing to assist in speedy but rigorous consideration of the proposal. We therefore ask first that a truncated select committee process be undertaken, allowing for the views of New Zealanders, particularly those from the West Coast, to be urgently considered. A two-week report back date would accommodate both needs, particularly given the high level of publicity and interest already demonstrated, and would allow the Bill to proceed before the House rises for the election.

The other issues that need to be addressed in the legislation are:

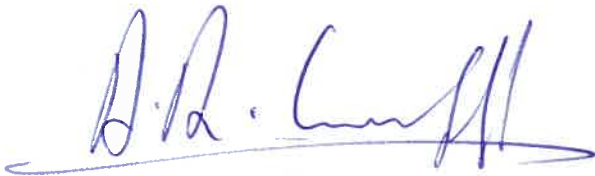
- We want to ensure the value of the felled trees for the West Coast region and protect the conservation estate. The Bill as presented does not ensure West Coasters, who have suffered major redundancies lately, will have preferred access to the trees to create the jobs from this one-off event. This must be remedied in the legislation.
- Most New Zealanders will consider a two-year timeframe more appropriate than the five years currently put forward, given the reality that most of the timber will be unsuitable for processing after lying on the ground for longer than that time. We require an amendment to reflect this.
- Given the proposed provisions that prevent unreasonable impact on conservation values or significant soil disturbance, the exemptions from the provisions of the Resource Management Act seem unnecessary and would potentially provide others an unfair advantage over private foresters with existing sustainable harvesting plans. This needs to be remedied in the bill.

- We are also concerned that the sudden additional volume of timber into the small indigenous market may collapse indigenous timber values and undermine existing West Coast business operations. This would undermine local jobs rather than increase opportunities which is the whole objective of this legislation.
- The maps indicating the areas of allowable logging are not specified in the Bill and their inclusion in the Bill is necessary for clarity.

Labour supports job creation and recognises the historic one-off wind throw event on the West Coast but wants to ensure any change to the Conservation Act delivers immediate benefits to the people who need them, not open the door to a return to logging of our native timber on our Conservation land for any timber trader.

We have discussed the urgency provisions with the Leader of the House and have Supplementary Order Papers in preparation on the policy issues outlined. Your considered but urgent response to these procedural and policy matters would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Cunliffe', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hon David Cunliffe
Leader of the Labour Party

Cc Hon Dr Nick Smith
Hon Gerry Brownlee