



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1440

TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

## **Jack Ducharme**

34 Heald Street  
Madison, ME 04950  
Cell: (207) 431-0775

Jack.Ducharme@legislature.maine.gov

### **Introduction for LD 768, An Act to Explore Alternative Uses of Pulpwood and to Support the Logging and Forestry Industries.**

Chairman Curry, Representative Roberts and distinguished members of the Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business Committee. I am Jack Ducharme, Representative for House District 111, Norridgewock, Solon and most of Madison. I'm here to present my bill, LD 768, An Act to Explore Alternative Uses of Pulpwood and to Support the Logging and Forestry Industries.

LD 768 is a concept bill that I hope will facilitate a conversation about how to expand the markets for the largest segment of the forestry resource, that being softwood pulp. There are some great things that are happening with wood products. Some are looking at products (cross laminated timber, fuel, etc) and determining if can be made from wood rather than other materials. Lumber continues to be a great use of our forest resource but in order to get logs large enough to make boards and framing timber, some of the abundant smaller trees must be cut to harvest the larger ones. Those are the ones that end up as softwood pulp. Because of this, we need to look at the totality of the resource rather than finding specific niche products to find new and better uses for it. The volume of this material is such that it would take many different uses that haven't been thought of yet. Thinning these smaller trees out helps the forest regenerate itself. According to Northern Woodlands, in the year 1,600 Maine had about 18.2 million acres of forest. Today we have about 17.5 million acres, this in spite of cutting trees steadily for over 400 years.

Soon, we will have TimberHP by Go Labs in Madison making insulation out of wood fiber using roughly 225,000 tons or more of material annually when they are in full operation. FOR/Maine and other groups have done a great deal of work in the strategic space but I think we need to make sure we don't forget the boots on the ground in the discussion.



As a former Selectman and current representative of Madison, I am acutely aware of the issues facing the forestry industry. In 2016, our own Madison Paper (UPM) closed its doors putting nearly 250 local people out of work and eliminating the need for about 250,000 tons of pulpwood annually. On April 15, 2020, the pulpwood digester at the Pixelle mill in Jay exploded eliminating the ability of over 2,000,000 tons of softwood pulp annually to be used that mill. Those two events alone place a significant hole in the market for softwood pulp in Maine. Because of these and the prior losses of the paper mills like Millinocket, East Millinocket, Bucksport, Maine must look at the softwood pulp resource itself to see if there are ways to stimulate either continued use in papermaking operations or if there are other markets for this abundant but marginally profitable resource. The impact on the logging and forestry industry is devastating. Not only are the loggers and truckers working for barely enough money to cover their costs but large users are able to drive the price down to levels that threaten the ability of loggers to make ends meet.

For many years loggers have been able to survive by cutting the trees, separating them into high grade pulp used in some papermaking processes, saw logs that go to lumber mills and then the low-grade softwood pulp (spruce, fir and hemlock) that would go to paper mills to make paper. Without the market for softwood pulp, much of this resource goes unused and is left in the woods to rot or worse, become the fuel of forest fires like we see in the Western part of the United States.

In a perfect world, we would find a way to facilitate the purchase of a new digester to create pulp that could be sold to various paper mills across the country. This leads to many questions. Would it help Pixelle make the Jay mill viable and thus saving hundreds of jobs to put some money behind a new digester? What else can we do with this abundant but low-grade resource that is so critical to our logging industry? Is there another outlet that can use this material? If loggers don't have a place to put this unprofitable resource, can they make money in the woods without it? Will the return on investment be enough to sustain the industry going forward?

Another concern is that the logging workforce is aging and will have significant turnover in the next 10 years. The economic barriers to entry into the logging business are significant and we don't see many young people clamoring to enter the logging business. If that workforce is eliminated or reduced significantly, large companies will have a huge edge

in creating the conditions for the harvest of pulpwood in Maine. They will not be able to run their mills without wood so they will find a way to supply them. It may not be the way Mainers want it to happen, but these companies have huge investments to support in the mills so they must produce their product. We currently have some really good people handling the business of managing our timberlands right now. I believe that it is in the best interest of Maine to see those small operators continue managing our forests. The House of Representatives in Washington recently passed a bill to allow young people, 16-17 years old to work with their family in the woods. Previously, these young folks were prevented by work safety rules from working in the woods. This has hurt the legacy generations of loggers. Maine should follow suit with this and other ways to stimulate entry into the logging business.

Thank you for considering LD 768. As we move forward through this process, I hope that the IDEA-B committee will be the catalyst to bring new ways to light to use this abundant forest resource that will be both economically viable and environmentally friendly. Both objectives must be considered in any possible solution in order to maintain our forest lands and in doing so, maintain our way of life.

Cordially,

Rep. Jack Ducharme  
House District 111  
Norridgewock, Solon, Madison (most of)