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IMPEDIMENTS TO THE SMALL BUSINESS OWNER IN MICHIGAN

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Doing business in Michigan for 38 years. Current FTE's in Michigan is 95 with another 35 in Wisconsin. Additionally, we work with 50 to 100 subcontractors at any given time. We are a fully integrated group of companies that deal with private, state, federal and our own lands. We are an FSC certified logging company and sawmill, as well as having FSC and Tree Farm Certification on our own lands. Our logging company also has SFI and Master Logger designation.

- Access to a sustainable, reliable, reasonably priced wood supply. The elephant in the room that we try to avoid, but without it, we would not have an industry.
- Lack of a designated business advocate within the DNR that understands the forest products industry. That business advocacy that was in the system in the past is what brought some of our large mills into Michigan years ago. Those mills are still here – and still creating a market for the logging industry. Example: Wisconsin
- There needs to be a better understanding within State government of the benefits and/or detriments to bringing in new business. Do we need an ethanol plant that provides 50 jobs but, at the same time, takes the wood supply from an existing mill that employs 400? Will the new business that you bring in be capable of maintaining a price structure that keeps the suppliers that are needed to wood the business.
- Hand in hand with that is the understanding of any government agency that recruits new business is knowledge of where the wood supply is and of how much there is.
- Needs to be more emphasis on retaining the companies and the jobs that we have. The majority of small business owners that I know are not just local entrepreneurs' but many are also second and third generation business owners. They have a love for their State and community and want to see that their friends and families are able to live and thrive in their area.
- Rethink the way we attract new business. Are we creating an uneven playing field for existing business when we give away tax dollars ?

- Better vetting process for new business. States need to be more collaborative in researching the companies that they attract. In all reality, government should not be picking winners – market forces should dictate that.
- Liberal unemployment and workmen's compensation awards
- Liberal electric cost increases. At a time when other parts of the country were seeing reduced rates, our Public Service Commission granted increases of up to 30%
- Regulation in general is increasing – detrimental to small business who many times have limited personnel and profit to absorb the additional requirements. Common sense regulation – not regulation for the sake of regulation.
- Fuel tax increases. I have heard only one trucker who is an owner/operator that is in favor of the fuel tax increase to support our road system. While we understand that a good infrastructure is a necessity, we have seen a loss of trucking capability in our industry. Much of that loss is due to the high cost of fuel and maintenance and the long hours. Higher taxes will not help that scenario.

We have a great State and, to be fair, a government that is trying to do everything in their power to see that the State, and its people, grows and prospers. The MDNR is making great strides in working with industry to foster its growth and achieve the potential that we have to grow jobs and grow Michigan. My hope is that 10 years from now I won't be sitting at this table having these same discussions as we have for the past 20 ☺ Instead, we will be enjoying the fruits of our labors together and living in a prosperous State, working in a strong and viable industry.