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BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Investment in Sussex area sawmill ‘good news’ for community: Mayor



Lauren Demers, a worker at the J.D. Irving, Limited sawmill near Sussex, poses for a photo. The company announced this week it's beginning a \$15-million update at its sawmill. Photo: Submitted/J.D. Irving, Limited

Robin Grant | Kings County Record

Forestry giant J.D. Irving, Limited announced this week it is beginning a \$15 million update at its Sussex area sawmill.

Mary Keith, vice-president of communications for J.D. Irving, Limited, said the sawmill in Four Corners requires a technology upgrade to the saw line and log scanners.

While Keith said the work will not likely create more jobs, the new investment will allow the mill "to compete and sustain jobs using the most modern technology."

Sussex Mayor Marc Thorne called the announcement good news because forestry is a cornerstone of the community.

"We appreciate the confidence that the Irving family has shown and continues to show, both in our community and workers," Thorne said. "In a year that's been filled with bad news, this is some good news. It's a bit of light in what's been a very dark year. We're pleased to hear it."

With flooding at the top of people's minds after the heavy rainfall last week, causing widespread evacuations and damage to homes and businesses, some residents have expressed concern that clear-cutting might be a factor in the worsening floods.

When asked whether the forestry industry could exacerbate flooding in the Sussex area, Keith pointed to an analysis conducted in 2015 that examined the impact of land use, such as agriculture, residential and forestry.

She said the study, which was reviewed with the Regional Service Commission 8 representing Sussex, determined forestry on JDI managed lands was not the cause of flooding because of its low -- 28 per cent -- footprint in the watershed.

"It revealed that the Kennebecasis and Waterford watersheds that flow into Sussex are below the threshold for typical flooding events," she said in an email. "However, extreme events, such as the recent heavy rainfall, were not considered in the analysis."

"Extreme events are likely to cause localized flooding, especially in areas where development has occurred on traditional flood zones," Keith added.