

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TIMBER SUPPLY PRESENTATION

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My name is Bill Bourgeois. I have a PhD in Forestry, 38 years experience, mostly in the forest industry promoting BC forest management and involvement with the CORE land use planning process. I am a Registered Professional Forester, consultant and coordinator of the non-partisan, volunteer supported initiative, *Healthy Forests-Healthy Communities: A conversation on BC forests* (HFHC).

I would like to thank the Committee and staff for providing me the opportunity to share the views we have collected through the 20 HFHC Community Dialogue Sessions and 27 Expert Background Briefs produced during 2011 and the more recent letters and opinion submissions that relate to the mandate of the Committee.

I would also like to recognize the Government for establishing this public consultation process, even though, I believe it has limitations, especially relative to the narrow terms of reference and short timeline for consultation and reporting on a very critical and long-term impact issue.

I will not reiterate the concerns over the options of harvesting in forest reserve areas articulated in my letters to the Ministers on April 8th and May 8th. I assume you may already have had the opportunity to read them and if not, I am providing copies. I would also encourage you to review the nearly 40 other letters and opinions posted on the HFHC website. Suffice it to say, as I did in the letters, consideration of this option is unwise, short sighted and has a high potential of losing community diversification opportunities.

I would like to focus my comments on the considerations outlined in the Committee's Terms of Reference, specifically,

- "Maintaining high environmental standards and protection of critical habitat for species and key environmental values,
- Optimal health of communities and as orderly a transition as possible to post beetle cut levels, and
- Maintaining a competitive forest industry."

It is through the Committee's response to these considerations you can provide the leadership to BC communities and those concerned about the future forest that has not been seen in other areas around the world suffering from catastrophic events.

Communities told us last year that they want to have more influence in forest management decisions relative to their local and regional forests. They also said they want a more diversified economy coming from the forest. As it relates to communities in the MPB epidemic area, the concern over “post-beetle” was forefront in their comments.

As the MPB epidemic progressed across the central interior, the vulnerability of communities to the potential impacts was well known by 2005 as was the projected fall down of timber supply. Government encouraged communities to develop adaptation strategies through the creation of the Beetle Action Coalitions (BACs) and the Northern and Southern Development Trusts. The Governments of BC and Canada have collectively spent \$1 billion on the MPB issue to date. If the previous additional commitment of \$1 billion was to be realized, the epidemic would cost taxpayers \$2 billion. To date this further commitment of \$200 million from BC and \$800 million from Ottawa would be very useful in helping communities adapt to the conditions following the epidemic. I would encourage this Committee to recommend the BC legislature both pressure Government to live up to their commitment and insist Ottawa fulfills theirs.

To date, it is my view the funding for implementation of the BAC adaptation strategies has been totally inadequate. This response is not unexpected. Politicians around the world and across Canada have long been known to focus on analyzing impacts, taking action on mitigation strategies and forgetting about adaptation (e.g., east coast cod fishery, BC coastal salmon fishery, MPB in the mid-west USA, ice storms in eastern Canada and Europe). This leaves the communities hung out to dry and scavenging for the needed funds. We are doing just this in BC by only committing \$1 million/yr for 3 years for each BAC to implement the adaptation strategies. This is small in consideration of the several hundreds of millions of dollars over a 20 year period estimated by the BACs to implement the strategies. I would hope BC politicians can learn from the mistakes of others and rise above the low standard set by them. Unfortunately, I don't see any action that would suggest this is in the cards. However, the Timber Supply Committee has the opportunity to take a leadership role in this regard. I would encourage you to recommend in your report that Government embark on a 10 year strategy with a focus on priority actions to help communities adapt to the changing economic and social environment.

We need to build on the work of the BACs. If you have questions about their priorities, take time to talk with them and come to agreement on the highest priorities. The first action should be to establish a community forest vision to guide decisions related to the local and regional forests. Where communities (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) do not have a clear and concise vision, Government should encourage them to produce one, if they are to influence and guide forest related decisions. It should be expected the strategies created by the BACs are consistent with these visions. Building the consistency may require time. However, the Committee could recommend that Government take steps to assist in this critical process. Without the vision, decisions are commonly knee jerk, driven by special interest groups and/or subject to the politics of the day, all of which are commonly not in the best interests of the forest or affected communities.

The decline in available timber supply has created a crisis and the need to utilize the forest to generate more sustainable jobs compared to those traditionally provided through the current forest related industries. Moving towards this goal has been a common call for 40 years with limited success compared to other jurisdictions in Canada and the USA. If we are to move beyond the rhetoric and into action, it will require both communities to investigate and encourage new businesses and Government to provide enabling support.

HFHC is holding Expert and Community Workshops now and through the fall related to the priority issues identified last year. We have just completed two of the Expert Workshops, one of which was on June 26th where we asked experts in four forest management fields (i.e., solid wood products, forest management, outdoor recreation and tourism and botanical forest products) to provide recommendations to decision-makers related to assisting communities with economic diversification opportunities. The experts told us the recommendations provided are in the most part not new. In some cases they were presented to Government 30 years ago. Why have we not moved forward to any significant extent? It appears the politicians of the day wanted a simple and quick solution when, achieving success takes time to work on a number of issues and encourage investors and entrepreneurs to create new viable and sustainable community-based businesses. Removing one of the assets to the non-timber industries (i.e., forest reserve values) will make the job more difficult and in some cases impossible.

Obviously, we are in the process of digesting and summarizing the information from the two Expert Workshops but it will be available for community input by September. The communities will be asked to review the results and identify any concerns from their perspectives. The combined input will become part of the HFHC report expected in January-February 2013.

If the Committee was to recommend and get Legislature acceptance of retaining the values in forest reserves and taking action on enabling communities and innovative businesses to generate more economic diversification from the forest, this public consultation process will be a success. If it is just maintaining the existing mills for a short period, it will be a failure.

I would like again thank you for the opportunity to share the views HFHC has collected across BC and encourage the Committee to take a leadership role through focusing on a long-term approach to addressing the community sustainability issue. I am available now or in the future to answer any questions you might have on the topics raised. Thank you.