

NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

Special committee to examine mid-term timber supply

VICTORIA – Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Minister Steve Thomson applauded today’s decision of the Legislative Assembly to form a Special Committee on Timber Supply to examine and make recommendations about mid-term timber supply in British Columbia, as a result of the mountain pine beetle infestation.

The committee will be conducting public consultations and has been asked to deliver a report by Aug. 15 this year.

The committee’s terms of reference are to specifically consider recommendations that could increase timber supply, including direction on the potential scope of changes to land-use objectives, rate of harvest and conversion of volume-based tenures to area-based tenures. The committee will also consider whether any changes to legislation are required.

In making its recommendations, the committee will need to consider the Province’s commitment to balance the budget and maintain competitive electricity rates; the need to maintain high environmental standards and protect critical wildlife habitat; orderly transition for communities to lower harvest levels; maintain a competitive forest industry; First Nations’ titles and rights; and the softwood lumber agreement and other trade agreements.

The committee is expected to hold its first meeting this week to elect its chair, develop a work plan and a schedule for public consultations.

The members of the Special Committee on Timber Supply are:

- John Rustad, MLA Nechako Lakes (convenor)
- Donna Barnett, MLA Cariboo-Chilcotin
- Eric Foster, MLA Vernon-Monashee
- Ben Stewart, MLA Westside-Kelowna
- Harry Bains, MLA Surrey-Newton
- Norm Macdonald, MLA Columbia River-Revelstoke
- Bill Routley, MLA Cowichan Valley

The committee will be supported by a technical advisory committee that will include former provincial chief foresters Larry Pedersen and Jim Snetsinger.

Quote:

Steve Thomson, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations –

“The issue of mid-term timber supply is of vital importance to not only the communities in the mountain pine beetle infested area, but to the province as a whole, given the importance of forestry as a key economic driver.”

“I’m pleased that it is a special legislative committee that will meet government’s commitment to public engagement on this issue.”

Quick Facts:

- Since 2001, the provincial government has committed \$884 million to battle the mountain pine beetle and mitigate its impacts.
- The current mountain pine beetle infestation is the largest in North America’s recorded history. An estimated 18.1 million hectares – an area more than five times the size of Vancouver Island – have been affected to some degree by the mountain pine beetle.
- Since the current infestation began, the mountain pine beetle has killed an estimated cumulative total of 710 million cubic metres of timber.
- The latest computer-modelling projections indicate about 58 per cent of the pine volume in the province may be killed by 2021. This is significantly less than the 80 per cent pine-kill that was projected six years ago.

Learn More:

About parliamentary committees: www.leg.bc.ca/cmt/index.htm

About the mountain pine beetle infestation: www.gov.bc.ca/pinebeetle

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