



WHY SHOULD BRITISH COLUMBIANS BE INTERESTED IN THE FUTURE OF BC'S FORESTS?

British Columbia (BC) has been known globally for its forests and forest environment. The forests are a Crown asset estimated to be worth \$3 Billion. Its values and resources contribute to our high standard of living and well-being.

British Columbians have a responsibility

People around the world are envious of the environmental, social/cultural and economic values provided to the owners (i.e., Provincial citizens) by BC forests. The citizens of BC have bestowed the management, protection and conservation of the forest resources to the Government and subsequently through contractual arrangements with the forest industry. The level of stewardship practiced by the two parties is expected to deliver these objectives such that the immediate and long term economic and social benefits they confer from the forest assets will be available to future generations. It is incumbent upon all British Columbians to hold the Government and industry accountable for this great responsibility. To do so, British Columbians need to learn and take an interest in BC forests and demand Government provide an accounting of the current state and future projections of the forest values to meet the long-term stewardship requirement.

BC forest values

BC forests have long been a stable contributor to the economic engine of the Province. Currently, the forest industry provides millions of dollars annually (\$674M-2013/14) to the Provincial treasury and over \$31 Billion in economic output in the Province. Although this fluctuates annually due to such challenges as the global market place, the revenue has always been a major part of the BC economy.

We continue to learn more about the value of forest plants in providing us with foods, medicines and other products that diversify our local community economy. Much is being learned from the Aboriginal culture in this regard. These “products” are part of the diversified forest economy.

Forest related tourism has grown over the last couple of decades. It now contributes \$1.5 Billion to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Province. This is extremely important and cannot afford to be jeopardized by the level of stewardship of BC forests.

Forests are not only economic providers. They contain social and cultural values that contribute significantly to our well-being, both from providing non-commercial recreational opportunities, solitude for mental health and comfort in knowing our culture is secure. There is a large body of research evidence demonstrates a person being within forests is one of the alternative medicines for our personal health.



Forests provide us with ecological services that allow us to have a high standard of living. A high level of forest stewardship results in a desired quality and quantity of water for our well-being. They also sequester carbon from the atmosphere to contribute to the decrease in carbon dioxide emissions and subsequently mitigating climate change. Forests also provide the habitat for one of the richest diversity of wildlife (1140 species of vertebrates) in North America. These ecological services are critical to our well-being.

Community resiliency

BC has over 60 rural communities with in excess of 350,000 people directly dependent upon the forest. These communities are being subjected to major changes economically, socially and environmentally. It is critical we ensure they become resilient when dealing with these changes. A viable, stable and sustainable forest sector is critical to achieving this objective. This is not only a rural community issue. Urban centres are dependent upon the forest sector to the tune of 1 in 16 jobs dependent upon the forest industry. Therefore, resiliency of rural communities is an issue for all British Columbians. These small communities need the tools to continue providing these benefits.

Forests are a renewable resource with a wide range of benefits. It is critical BC citizens ensure these are retained. Knowing about BC forests and holding the Government and industry accountable for their long-term assurance is the responsibility of us all as owners of the forest.

We can learn from the First Nations' culture. The land is the basis of their being. They have learned that any time you disturb one part of the land, you impact the other parts. The objective is to take the bounty of the land but not to the level of irreversible impacts to all aspects of the land. This approach can be considered long-term stewardship in the western culture.

Why be interested in the future of BC forests?

It is important that all British Columbians become informed and engaged about BC forests so that:

- the Government and industry are held accountable regarding the responsibility bestowed upon them for long-term stewardship;
- the \$3 Billion asset of BC forests is maintained and enhanced for future generations;
- the values associated with BC forests are maintained to provide British Columbians with the social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits for the well-being and standard of living accustomed by the owners; and
- Rural communities can become resilient and continually deliver the forest benefits for all British Columbians.