

LONG-TERM FOREST STEWARDSHIP

Priority Issues in Building Community Resiliency

Bill Bourgeois, PhD, RPF (Ret)
President, New Direction Resource Management Ltd
Coordinator, *Healthy Forests-Healthy Communities* Initiative

ISSUE

Many foresters and others believe significant change is needed in the management of BC Crown lands to deliver on the expected long-term outcomes of the forest asset British Columbians have inherited. However, based on the actions and comments from Government and the forest industry, only minor “tweaking” is viewed as being required. This position appears to be associated with meeting the specific needs of the these two entities without adequate consideration for long-term forest stewardship and actions to ensure the BC forest lands asset contributes to its potential in moving communities to a state of resiliency. Leadership in this regard is essential.

An opinion article on the importance of foresters in providing leadership in the long-term stewardship and subsequent social license in the management of BC forests was published last year in the BC Forester Magazine ([July/August 2016 Volume 23 Issue 4](#) pp 22-13). Foresters need to provide a critical aspect of leadership. However, within the political structure of BC, significant participation of communities is essential as they will be the primary recipient of the results of inadequate strategic action involvement regarding their local forests. Communities have shown concern through; 1) their comments provided during the *Healthy Forests-Healthy Communities* dialogue initiative (<http://bcforestconversation.com>), 2) the passing of the UBCM AGM resolutions over the years (<http://www.ubcm.ca/resolutions/default.aspx>) regarding management of BC forests, 3) the recent UBCM survey regarding forest issues (*Forest Policy Decision-Making: The Case for Greater Community Consultation and Engagement*) and 4) the recent Truck Loggers Association survey of coastal communities regarding the future of the forest sector (<http://www.tla.ca/Perspectives>). In all of these initiatives, communities have clearly stated there is a need for forest management infrastructure change to reflect the requirements of community residents and businesses.

PRIORITY POLITICAL ISSUES

Although there does not appear to be any political appetite for significant change, the following are priority issues that need political action in **moving toward long-term forest stewardship**. Any opportunity to encourage politicians to take action on these priority issues should be raised with them at every

opportunity. The **five (5) priority issues and associated actions** politicians are recommended to adopt are:

1) Establishing long-term forest stewardship direction

- a) Establishing legally binding forest stewardship principles, objectives, vision and goals from which all legislation, regulation and policies must be consistent.
- b) Establishing a Board of Enquiry, led by a well-respected person without biases to the forest industry, community forests or Government, to deliver within 12 months, recommended requirements for:
 - i) Long-term forest stewardship requirements,
 - ii) Community influence regarding local forest decision-making, and
 - iii) Community forest sector economic diversification.

2) Ensuring Professional Reliance performance meets community expectations

- a) Providing adequate and transparent compliance and enforcement of forest management practices that builds confidence that long-term forest stewardship is not being compromised.
- b) Increasing involvement of MFLNRO staff in Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP) decision-making.
- c) Broadening the mandate of the Forest Practices Board to include forest stewardship outside the Forest and Range Practices Act and the Wildfire Act, including cumulative effects of all activities on forest lands.

3) Requiring landscape level planning

- a) Requiring area-based landscape level planning (spatially and temporally) using ecosystem management principles and the vision, goals, indicators and targets for each management unit.
- b) Determining, with assistance from MFLNRO, cumulative effects of all activities on forest lands (e.g., forestry, oil and gas, mining, etc.).

4) Generating rural community influence on strategic forest lands decision-making

- a) Assisting communities in development of a vision, goals and strategic action plan for their local forests.
- b) Removing barriers and providing Government leadership to encourage growth and innovation of the secondary wood manufacturing sector.
- c) Restoring the land use plan implementation committees to update Land Use Plans based on new information without opening the plans to further multi-stakeholder negotiations.

5) Re-invigorating the BC forest resources research sector

- a) Ensuring MFLNRO has an adequate and vibrant strategic forest research program.
- b) Encouraging, through Government leadership, collaboration and cooperation between BC forest lands research programs (Government, industry, academic institutions).