

FOREST PRIORITIES FOR PARTY MAJORITY SUPPORT

Bill Bourgeois, PhD, RPF (Ret)

Coordinator, *Healthy Forests-Healthy Communities* (HFHC)

The results of the May 9, 2017 Provincial election suggest there is a high potential for a Minority Government with the BC Greens holding the deciding vote on legislative issues and supporting retention of power by either the BC Liberals or NDP. Negotiations are on-going between the BC Greens and both the BC Liberals and NDP regarding key issues of each Party. It is recognized there are many social, environmental and economic issues presented during the election campaign that are seen as higher public priorities than those related to the forest sector. However, forestry is one, if not the highest, economic issue for long-term economic stability in the Province and should be given consideration in the negotiations. All five HFHC priority issues identified earlier ([Political priority issues](#)) are important but if only two can be included in the negotiations, **establishing long-term forest stewardship direction and encouraging community economic diversification through secondary wood manufacturing** have the potential to make the most long-term wealth generating impact while protecting environmental values. Real action on these two priorities is essential in achieving the full potential of the BC forest asset and moving toward rural community resiliency. The BC Liberals, BC Greens and NDP are encouraged to include in the negotiation discussions and agreements a commitment to work together in taking early and assertive action on each of these issues.

The following are Party election commitments on each of these HFHC priority issues.

1) HFHC Priority Issue – Establishing long-term forest stewardship direction

- a) **BC Liberals** are commitment to:
 - i) Continuing the *Forest Enhancement Society* with one-time \$235M contribution
 - ii) Continuing the *Forest for Tomorrow Program* with \$150M funding as a contribution to reforesting 300,000 ha over 5 years
 - iii) Providing an additional \$4M to identify and eliminate forest stands impacted by the Spruce Beetle in the Omineca forest region
 - iv) Continuing the forest inventory investment of \$8.5M annually
- b) **NDP** are commitment to:
 - i) Long-term forest stewardship
- c) **BC Greens** are commitment to:
 - i) Enacting a modern, evidence based, multi-objective *BC Forest and Range Ecology Act*
 - ii) Ensuring resilient forests and sustainable forestry, maximizing the value from our forests and ensuring their sustainable long-term management
 - iii) Rebuilding the scientific and technical capability of the BC Public Service

2) HFHC Priority Issue – Encouraging community economic diversification through secondary wood manufacturing

a) **BC Liberals** are commitment to:

- i) Creating a *Wood (value-added) Secretariat* to implement the *Value-added Sector Action Plan*
- ii) Extending the *Rural Dividend Fund* for 3 more years with a total commitment of \$150M

b) **NDP** are commitment to:

- i) Maximizing the use of innovative BC wood products in infrastructure projects
- ii) Providing incentives to BC builders who use engineered wood products and BC companies starting innovative wood manufacturing operations
- iii) Working with industry, local governments and First Nations to expand wood manufacturing capacity
- iv) Working with BC's forest industry to find fair and lasting solutions that keep more logs in BC for processing

c) **BC Greens** are commitment to:

- i) Promoting value-added enterprises in the forest industry
- ii) Placing further restrictions on the export of raw logs, while recognizing raw log exports are a symptom of a struggling value-added forest industry and not the cause
- iii) Establishing a *Forest Opportunities Panel* mandated to identify opportunities for promoting innovation, value-added production, independent regional operations and indigenous enterprises
- iv) Instituting policies to ensure forest waste is used productively
- v) Supporting small, rural resource-dependent communities, by building skills and capacity for a future forest industry and promoting investment in economic diversification in rural communities

I encourage all readers of this document to make it known to their contacts in the political parties of these recommendations.