

BC FOREST RENEWAL VISION FRAMEWORK

Action Plan

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Government has embarked on a “*Modernization of Forest Policy*” initiative to reflect the demands of the 21st Century related to the BC Forest Asset (the BC forest). Although no vision has been explicitly identified, one statement in the announcement document could be considered a vision i.e. “ **...ensure a diverse, sustainable forest sector for today and for generations to come.**”

Government is moving toward this “vision” by reviewing and revising items in 20 policy areas under three (3) primary guiding principles which could be considered goals:

- 1) Increasing forest sector participation,
- 2) Enhancing stewardship and sustainability, and
- 3) Strengthening social contact.

The method adopted includes extensive consultation on a series of Government produced *Intensions Papers* that identify the potential changes to forest policy and legislation that will provide guidance for decision-making by the Ministry and industry personnel. Their objective appears to be getting input into what should and should not be included to move toward the Government “vision”.

There is one major deficiency in the approach taken. Specifically, there is a lack of clear, high-level statements from Government relative to an infrastructure framework that guides the process. Correction of this limitation could be achieved by developing a vision infrastructure framework as outlined in <https://www.bcforestconversation.com/wp-content/uploads/BC-forest-renewal-vision-framework-Nov-update.pdf> (*Vision Infrastructure Framework*). All forest resource professionals have been taught to identify goals and objectives before implementing studies or projects. However, these are not clear in the *Modernization of forest policy* initiative. Adopting the *Vision Infrastructure Framework* recommendations summarized below will overcome this major deficiency and benefit Government, forest-dependent communities, and the Forest sector by:

- 1) Providing clear, and where necessary, legal guidance for decision-makers and the public,
- 2) Bringing certainty to the Forest Sector and Indigenous and Non-indigenous communities,
- 3) Increasing Indigenous community involvement in the Forest Sector,
- 4) Integrating Indigenous traditional knowledge and western science,
- 5) Requiring forest management plans to focus on integrating and balancing biodiversity conservation, non-timber resources conservation, and social/cultural values conservation,

- 6) Building on the current components of the Forest Sector that meet the goals of the policy framework while removing those that are obsolete and not productive contributors to the vision,
- 7) Increasing diversification of the Forest Sector and its products,
- 8) Moving toward community resiliency through community economic development and regional Forest Sector diversification, and
- 9) Transitioning to a 21st Century Forest Sector without major negative economic and social impacts.

Changes associated with these actions should not be considered trivial or “tweaking” and will require Government to provide leadership by encouraging, not with words, but through actions, cooperation, collaboration, innovation, and the challenging of the current system by the key parties. The result will be a significantly different Forest Sector and stewardship of the BC Forest Asset compared to the current model. The following are specific actions recommended to achieve this outcome.

Governance Infrastructure

The BC Forest Asset has the potential to provide a significant contribution toward resiliency of the 140 forest-dependent communities. To achieve this, Government needs to:

- 1) **Provide a clear official Provincial, BC Forest Asset goal** that will guide decision-making.
- 2) **Adopt strategic actions that support, including financially, communities** wishing to implement the three (3) components necessary to move toward community resiliency, i.e.
 - a) Long-term forest stewardship,
 - b) A diversified regional Forest Sector, and
 - c) Forestry knowledgeable communities.
- 3) **Provide the five (5) critical infrastructure components** necessary to guide decision-making, i.e.
 - a) Clear and legally binding forest stewardship principles,
 - b) Clear and legally binding provincial forest resources vision statements for long-term stewardship, utilization, and conservation of the BC Forest Asset,
 - c) Clear regional community BC Forest Asset vision statements,
 - d) A management unit strategic planning framework for the long-term stewardship, utilization, and conservation of the BC Forest Asset, and
 - e) Nested and integrated regulations and policies.

Community Resiliency Infrastructure

Communities have asked for greater influence in the management of their local/regional forests as they move to resiliency. Also, Government has identified goals of restoring public confidence, improving the social contract, and contributing to the long-term forest stewardship of local/regional forests. These

two goals could be effective and constructive if the focus is at the strategic rather than operations level. Consequently, moving toward community resiliency should become a Government priority and be clearly stated in the *Modernization of the Forest Policy* initiative. Achieving these goals will require Government to:

- 1) **Initiate a forest knowledge extension initiative** to develop and maintain a community forest culture with an emphasis on rural communities using knowledgeable and trustworthy experts in the various fields.
- 2) **Provide financial and guidance support to communities** in identifying strategic actions to move toward economic diversification and community resiliency consistent with the nature of the regional BC Forest Asset.
- 3) **Initiate a program, to support financially and through guidance, regional Indigenous and Non-Indigenous communities** to collaboratively develop long-term forest stewardship and wood manufacturing visions consistent with the nature of the regional BC Forest Asset.
- 4) **Identify the barriers in achieving the new manufacturing sector** using small working groups consisting of knowledgeable, innovative, and collaboratively independent specialists to identify solutions to overcome the barriers and recommend where creation of regional wood manufacturing clusters would be appropriate.
- 5) **Modify and clarify existing legislation, regulations, and policies to create a strong investment climate** that encourages secondary wood manufacturing within a region consistent with the nature of the regional BC Forest Asset and economic conditions.

Long-term Forest Stewardship

BC has a sound history and basis for long-term forest stewardship as reflected in the large percentage of managed lands under third party certification. However, there are areas where improvement is required to manage the BC Forest Asset to meet the 21st Century demands, especially as it relates to contributing to community resiliency and maintaining and capitalizing on the BC Forest Asset. To make these adjustments, Government needs to:

- 1) **Expedite the land use planning update process**, including integration of First Nations and Government plans, to provide the basis for moving toward community resiliency with consideration of the reconciliation requirements.
- 2) **Evaluate and allocate the required funding for providing a forest resources inventory** that is necessary to achieve well-managed forests and implement a strategic action plan to provide sustainability of the funding for the inventories over a 10-year period.

- 3) **Engage with other research institutions to build a BC cooperative and collaborative model** for forest related research to meet the needs of current and future BC Forest Asset decision-making.
- 4) **Adopt the integration of old growth values as part of the new Forest Sector vision framework** as proposed.
- 5) **Adopt a nested-integrated approach to monitoring forest management practices** that will build public confidence in knowing the state of the BC Forest Asset.
- 6) **Ensure sufficient Ministry staff and resources are available to adequately monitor forest practices** and overcome the deficiencies noted by the Forest Practices Board and the BC Ombudsman.

Next Steps

Although the suggested actions noted above might appear to undermine the existing Government methodology involving the *Intensions Papers*, this is not intended or necessary. All these specific actions can be, for the most part, integrated into the recommendations currently being provided through the consultations process. The recommended action items are guidance that will assist in interpretation and clarification of the currently being gathered information. If adopted as recommended in the *Vision Infrastructure Framework*, a review of the final draft of recommended changes from the *Intensions Papers* consultations, may or may not need changing. If adjustments are required to satisfy the *Vision Infrastructure Framework* guidance recommendations, it would be well worth the effort to produce a set of management tools that will lead to **ensuring a diverse, sustainable forest sector for today and generations to come**. At the very least, it will provide clarity on the various policies for use by decision-makers.