

# BC FORESTRY: WALKING THE PATH TO SUSTAINED SUCCESS

by Premier Christy Clark



**T**hey say it's not about whether you get knocked down—it's whether you get up.

For the 150,000 British Columbians who depend on a thriving forest industry to pay their mortgage and provide for their families, directly or indirectly, there have been a few knockdowns the past few years. The global economic slowdown, the pine beetle infestation and shifting market demands have all presented challenges.

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There's no question these have been significant problems, which caused a lot of uncertainty and sleepless nights. Yet the future is bright.

Not only is global demand on the rise, but we're working closely with the industry to ensure BC's forest industry remains competitive.

It starts with ensuring a reliable, sustainable timber supply, with targeted investments in forest growth, including the \$10 million for Strategic Wildfire Prevention we announced at last year's UBCM Conference—bringing the total to \$78 million since 2004—which focuses on reducing the wildfire risk around communities. We're also developing the Forest Enhancement Program, to undertake salvage harvesting of dead timber, wildfire risk reduction and fuel management operations, and to enhance reforestation efforts and wildlife habitat restoration in stands severely impacted by wildfires and mountain pine beetle.

We're also focusing on creating certainty around the land base by continuing to work with First Nations, especially in the light of last year's Supreme Court decision. That's why I've convened two historic meetings between my Cabinet

and First Nations leaders—because quite frankly, as a province we haven't always ensured First Nations received a fair share of the economic benefits from our resource economy.

With more agreements every year, and renewed efforts towards reconciliation and negotiation, we're on the right track.

By continuing our proven strategy of international trade missions and negotiations, we're also going to continue to

grow markets for BC wood, especially with the growing markets of Asia; for example, exports to China have increased by 20 times since 2003. But as important as those markets have become, our primary market will continue to be the United States for the foreseeable future. I have made it clear to the new federal government that renewing the Softwood Lumber Agreement will continue to be our priority.

While government is finding ways to expand traditional export markets for BC wood products, it's also important to explore new technologies and products. For example, almost a third of BC's wood fibre is used for bio-energy—and with an increasing emphasis on green solutions for heating and energy around the world, demand is only going to grow.

Innovation also means finding new ways to use very old products. BC is a world leader in using wood to construct taller and more complex structures than ever before—just look at the Wood Innovation and Design Centre in Prince George. Currently the tallest contemporary wood building in North America, it may not retain that title for long; scientists and design professionals

are researching wood buildings of up to 30 storeys.

With targeted investment, support for applied research, policies that support bioenergy, alternative wood-based product manufacturing and investment, and regulatory reductions that drive innovation—BC's forest industry can and will continue to lead.

It's appropriate this year's TLA's 73rd Convention & Trade Show is all about adapting to steep change—because even for the oldest industry in BC, the path to success sometimes means climbing a steep hill.

We'll be there to help and support you every step of the way, because the success of the forest industry matters for all British Columbians. The forest industry provides good-paying, secure jobs; the kind people raise families on, creating and supporting entire communities.

If you look at value-added economic output, BC's forest sector is the largest in North America. In dollar values, forest products are worth double what we export in metallic minerals and in coal. That's in addition to the estimated \$757 million in direct revenues to government, which funds the services we all depend on, from health care to schools. Over the next three years, we're forecasting forest revenues to break \$900 million.

This is the 73rd annual TLA convention, which goes to show the forest industry's longevity and durability. If change is the only constant in forestry; then one of the only constants in British Columbia is forestry. Through good times and bad, it's been dependable, resilient, and profitable. That was the case 73 years ago—and it will still be the case 73 years in the future.

***Thank you for your hard work. 🌲***