



CREATING POSITIVE CHANGE: OUR FOREST SECTOR COMPETITIVENESS STRATEGY

By Minister Steve Thomson
Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

It's been another interesting year for BC's forest sector and this past year one of the main focuses of the ministry has been work on a Forest Sector Competitiveness Strategy. As global market conditions change, we need to change with them and we all need to work together in order to keep BC's competitiveness position. Why? Because forestry built this province and, although our economy is becoming more diversified, forestry remains a key economic driver.

under development will be operational in fiscal 2016/2017.

The program will undertake salvage harvesting of dead timber, wildfire risk reduction and fuel management operations. The program will also enhance reforestation efforts and wildlife habitat restoration in stands severely impacted by wildfires and mountain pine beetle in the Interior. Enhancement would also occur on low-productivity, high-elevation hemlock and balsam forests on the coast to increase their long-term

Minister to Japan and China. I'll be accompanied by 30 senior forestry executives, and the intent, as always, is to build the market for BC wood products in our two biggest off-shore markets. Having a strong market in China certainly helped BC when the US housing market crashed.

The recent expiry of the Canada-US Softwood Lumber Agreement is a timely reminder of why we should not put all our trade eggs in one basket. That being said, the US does remain BC's largest market for softwood lumber products, and while our preference would be free trade, a managed trade agreement has been valuable in providing certainty and stability on both sides of the border. BC supports discussions aimed at providing predictable access to the US market and avoiding costly trade litigation. Without a managed trade agreement, BC could face unwarranted duties imposed by the US on BC lumber exports. Contrary to US industry allegations, BC's auction based timber pricing system ensures that timber is market priced.

The most important part of Forest Sector Competitiveness is safety. Everyone should know when heading out to the job site that they'll return home safe to their families at the end of the day. Over the past 10 years the forest harvesting industry has reduced the number of fatalities by two-thirds and serious injuries by one-third. However, one fatality is one too many and injuries are a sign that we could do things better. I encourage all of you reading this article to pledge to make 2016 a fatality-free year.

Best wishes for a successful convention! 🌲

Forestry provides almost 150,000 direct and indirect jobs in communities all around the province. We want to work to keep it that way.

Forestry provides almost 150,000 direct and indirect jobs in communities all around the province. We want to work to keep it that way. Government's role is to provide the hosting conditions, and the environment that will allow industry to thrive and keep those jobs.

The strategy has six key themes:

- Reliable and Sustainable Timber Supply
- Competitive Industry Hosting Conditions
- Improving Certainty around the Land Base
- Market Access and Growth for Forest Products
- Driving Innovation and Diversification
- Rural Community Transition and Stability

In September, in her keynote address to UBCM, Premier Christy Clark announced a new Forest Enhancement Program. This new program currently

value. The program will specifically target areas that were previously thought to be too uneconomic to harvest and reforest. In the Interior, now that the mountain pine beetle infestation has run its course, we need to do more to restore wildlife habitat, and also look for opportunities to maximize use of residual fibre. The Forestry Fibre Action Plan released in fall 2015, found ways to enhance security of fibre supply for secondary and non-lumber users of lower quality and residual fibre.

On the coast, ministry staff and industry are looking at ways to drive out the inefficiencies and extra costs associated with log handling. Every time a log is handled, the value of the log is reduced. So far, the joint government and industry team has mapped out the log handling process and identified four key projects to improve efficiencies in: scaling methods, export process, cruise-based billing, and log grading.

Market access is an important part of competitiveness and to that end, at the time of writing, I'm about to embark on my fourth trade mission as Forests