

THREE PARTIES, ONE PROVINCE: HEARING ALL THE PERSPECTIVES ON FORESTRY

TLA Editorial

As we settle into the results of the last election and figure out how the government will move forward, it is important to reach out to all three parties to understand their perspectives on BC's forest industry.

Photo: Courtesy of the BC Liberals



Premier Christy Clark, BC Liberals
As this new minority government forms, what is your focus for the forest industry outside of seeking a resolution to the softwood lumber dispute?

We're focused on the Forest Sector Competitiveness Agenda we released last August. The agenda has three goals: healthy, resilient forests; globally competitive and diverse industry; stable communities and First Nations.

This is our road map for the future. It recognizes challenges such as declining timber supply, and the ongoing uncertainty with the United States, while also identifying opportunities and ways to capitalize on them, especially around technology and innovation.

As always, we are also focused on diversifying our markets. We have achieved success opening up the Chinese market for BC wood, and are also making inroads into India.

As the forest industry continues to work to ensure global competitiveness, what do you think you can do to help us achieve that?

It's about building a competitive industry at home, while also opening new markets for our products, building on our track record of growing new markets, particularly in Asia.

For example, since we first started work in China 14 years ago, exports there have grown 2,000 per cent. We're working on duplicating that strategy in India. We've quadrupled softwood exports there in just three years. Our Minister of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations Steve Thomson has done an incredible job identifying and creating new opportunities overseas—both opening doors, and selling them.

As the working forest land base in BC continues to shrink as a result of environmental protection, how can we ensure a strong and sustainable forest industry in BC?

Healthy forests are necessary to ensure a strong, sustainable forest industry for now and the future. In addition to supporting jobs, forests are also important for wildlife and recreation, that's why in addition to programs such as Forests for Tomorrow, we've invested \$235 million in the Forest Enhancement Society of BC over the last two years to restore damaged forests, improve wildlife habitat and reduce wildfire risk.

Environmental protection will continue to be an integral part of sustainable forest management. Working with the industry, our government has been piloting co-location reserves, since old growth management areas often serve as wildlife habitat areas for certain species.

BC forest companies can be proud of their environmental record, with more land certified to independent sustainable forest management standards than anywhere else in the world.

Given forestry is the economic backbone of BC's rural communities, how do you think your government can support forestry in BC?

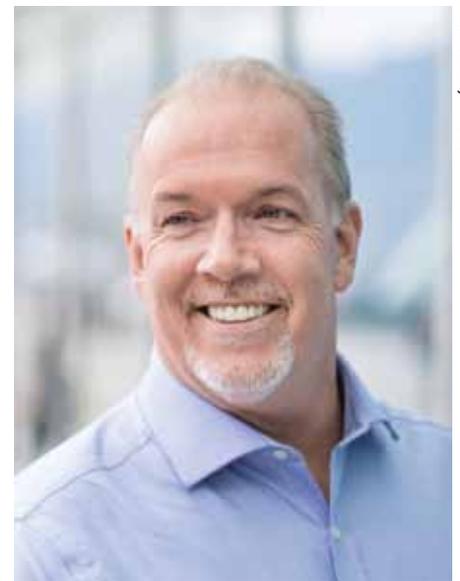
Forestry isn't just the economic backbone of BC's rural communities—with over 60,000 jobs in 140 communities; it's the backbone and founding industry of our entire province.

It starts with supporting forest-dependent communities. We've already invested more than \$1 billion to help prepare for economic transition for those suffering from the effects of the mountain pine beetle.

That includes the \$100 million Rural Dividend designed to help rural communities diversify their economies, which has already helped more than 300 local governments, First Nations and community groups.

We also invested \$185 million in the Northern Development Initiative Trust to help northern communities diversify their economies. In just the last 11 years, it has invested in more than 2,300 projects that have leveraged other funding to bring \$1.3 billion in new investment to central and northern BC.

Photo: Courtesy of the NDP



John Horgan, NDP
As this new minority government forms, what is your party's focus for the forest industry outside of seeking a resolution to the softwood lumber dispute?

My focus throughout government is on creating and maintaining good-paying, stable jobs for British Columbians, fixing the services people rely on and making life more affordable for families.

More than 30,000 jobs have been lost in forestry under Christy Clark and the BC Liberals. Those were family supporting jobs. Those were community supporting jobs. Restoring those jobs and putting our forests back to work for British Columbians is a high priority.

As the forest industry continues to work to ensure global competitiveness, what does your party think you can do to help us achieve that?

If we want the world to use our products we need to lead the way. Unlike Christy Clark and the BC Liberals we will require the use of BC wood in public projects to help kickstart our engineered wood industry and create jobs in local communities. We will also invest in research into new BC wood products and new processes to help us get the most jobs out of our forests. And we will work with industry players to market BC wood products to the world.

As the working forest land base in BC continues to shrink as a result of environmental protection, how can we ensure a strong and sustainable forest industry in BC?

We have to get better at using BC logs to create BC jobs. The Ontario forest industry creates five jobs for every one job created in BC. Instead of shipping raw logs overseas while local mills struggle to access fibre we're going to focus on ensuring BC wood employs people in BC communities. And unlike Christy Clark and the BC Liberals, who put people's jobs at risk with 16 years neglect of forest health, we will put people to work replanting and restoring our forests for the future.

Given forestry is the economic backbone of BC's rural communities, how do you think your government can support forestry in BC?

We're going to create jobs for people in forestry by using BC wood to meet the needs of BC families and communities. We've committed making life more affordable and addressing the housing crisis by building 114,000 new homes for BC families. Every one of those homes will utilize BC wood and engineered wood products. We will also showcase BC wood to the world when we build new and upgraded schools and hospitals across the province. By creating a mar-

ket for innovative BC wood products at home, we will give the industry a stable base from which to expand their businesses and sell these products globally.

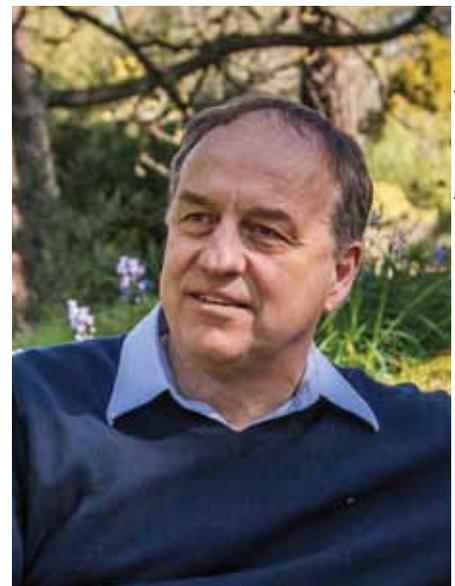


Photo: Courtesy of the Green Party

Andrew Weaver, Green

As this new minority government forms, what is your party's focus for the forest industry outside of seeking a resolution to the softwood lumber dispute?

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BC's renewable resources are one of its greatest strengths. We will work to seize the economic opportunities that our natural resources afford us in order to support individuals and communities across BC. We will do this through promoting efficiency, value-added and intrinsic benefits, by promoting their stewardship and sustainable use.

In the past two decades, 100 sawmills have closed and over 40,000 direct forestry sector jobs have been lost. As an MLA and leader of the BC Green Caucus, my priority is to optimize the value of BC's forests for British Columbians, to support the industry in a way that keeps its jobs and its value in BC. We are focused on maximizing the value of our forests and keeping the value in BC. We will support resource-dependent rural communities to ensure they are benefitting first and foremost from the forestry sector.

As the forest industry continues to work to ensure global competitiveness, what does your party think you can do to help us achieve that?

The BC Green Party supports policies to encourage innovation and market dif-

ferentiation for BC forestry companies. For example, our platform proposed creating a Forestry Opportunities Panel that would identify opportunities for promoting innovation, value-added production, independent regional operations and indigenous enterprises.

We will also support policies that identify new markets for BC forestry products and work co-operatively with the federal government and industry to secure fair, stable and beneficial trade agreements. By building on our strengths, like our highly educated and skilled workforce, in addition to our renewable resources, we can create a resilient forestry sector that thrives internationally.

As the working forest land base in BC continues to shrink as a result of environmental protection, how can we ensure a strong and sustainable forest industry in BC?

We are committed to the responsible management of our forests and the long-term viability of our forestry sector. Environmental protection is crucial to ensure that the forestry sector is sustainable, so that the people of British

Columbia can benefit from the forestry sector for generations to come. By supporting the industry in ways that maximize value and minimize waste, we can ensure that a healthy environment and a strong economy go hand-in-hand.

Given forestry is the economic backbone of BC's rural communities, how do you think your government can support forestry in BC?

Forestry is critical in sustaining rural communities across BC, as well as our economy as a whole. Though we are not in government, we will work from our position to ensure resilient forests and sustainable forestry, maximizing the value from our forests and ensuring their sustainable long-term management. We will work to maximize the economic contribution of forest fibre, especially for local communities and First Nations.

We will support smaller, BC-based companies in obtaining forestry tenures and encouraging value-added aspects of the industry. We will also support small, rural resource-dependent communities by building skills and capacity and promoting economic diversification. In our platform, we also




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proposed removing PST on purchases of machinery and equipment for the modernization, upgrading and investment in sawmills and value-added wood processing. In government, we will propose innovative solutions like these to encourage keeping the value of BC's forestry industry in BC where it belongs.

These responses are mostly platform summaries that remind us where each party stands. The TLA doesn't agree with everything that was stated. That said, we understand that good debate often comes out of disagree-

ment and we know communication is always important.

It's clear all three parties value the forest industry and understand it is the top natural resource revenue generator for this province. They also recognize that the tax base—both rural and urban—is supported by employment and businesses reliant on our forest resource. However, some of BC's MLAs may not know as much about forestry as they would like to. That's where the Truck Loggers Association can help.

TLA members are the local contractors and suppliers that provide well-paying jobs throughout British Colum-

bia and reinvest their earnings back into their businesses, their suppliers and their communities. The TLA and its members have a deeply vested interest in the success of the province and the sustainability of the forest sector. The TLA is also non-partisan and will work with all governing and opposition political parties to build a healthy forestry industry and ensure that those working in the forest resource share in its prosperity.▲



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