



## A FORESTRY DIALOGUE: DEVELOPING A PATHWAY FOR THE LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT OF BC'S FORESTS

Victoria, BC – April 9 & 10, 2019

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### COMMUNITY MEETINGS SUMMARY

During March 2019, a series of community conversations were held around the province<sup>1</sup>. The locations were chosen to hear a range of community concerns, values and experiences with forest management around BC. The purpose of these meetings was to provide a process for bringing the community voice into the April 9-10 discussion.

We were welcomed at each meeting to the indigenous traditional territory. The responsibility that we all have to treat the indigenous people with trust, respect and honouring the principles of UNDRIP was discussed and universally accepted.

Much of the overall discussion focussed on the pressing need to update and modernize FRPA (the Forest and Range Practices Act), and to implement the changes recommended by Mark Haddock in his report on professional reliance<sup>2</sup>. It was acknowledged that the government is implementing some aspects of the professional reliance report and that changes to FRPA are forthcoming.

The discussion at each meeting focused on three questions:

1. *What are your general concerns?*
2. *What are the changes needed to address these concerns?*
3. *Given this situation, what would bring you hope?*

From each question a pattern of answers or general themes emerged. A summary of these themes follows.

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<sup>1</sup> Bob Peart had conversations with people from Hazelton, Smithers, Nelson, Peachland, Penticton, Grand Forks, Sooke and Nanaimo. There were 12-15 people present at each meeting.

<sup>2</sup> For information on the Professional Reliance Review: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/professionalreliance/>  
For a copy of the final report on Professional Reliance:  
[https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/272/2018/06/Professional\\_Reliance\\_Review\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/272/2018/06/Professional_Reliance_Review_Final_Report.pdf)

***What are your general concerns?***

- There is little sense of long-term sustainability and vision for the forest landscape.
- Forest-watershed management, in particular the loss of intact watersheds.
- The total collapse of the public process.
- No thought for ecosystem health.
- The overall weakness and tone of the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA).
- BC Timber Sales and the disrespectful manner in which they operate.
- The urgent context of climate change.
- The overcutting of old growth.
- The floods and flooding caused by poor forest management.
- Lack of government oversight and enforcement.

***What are the changes needed to address these concerns?***

- A transparent public process with meaningful involvement.
- Specific, measurable legal standards and objectives for both timber and non-timber values.
- Returning authority and oversight to the District Manager.
- Reducing raw log exports.
- The protection of old growth and high risk BEC zone forests.
- A long-term sustainable vision for planning and managing our water and watersheds.
- Fully implement the Water Sustainability Act, with relevant regulations.
- An approach to non-timber values that honours recreation, tourism and visual quality.
- An increased focus on landscape level planning for watersheds, salmon and wildlife habitat.
- A lower AAC, based on accurate and up-to-date assessments and inventory.
- A broader mandate for the Forest Practices Board.
- Increased government research, monitoring and enforcement.
- Incorporating forest structure and the management of carbon into forest planning.
- BC Timber Sales needs to better reflect community values and the local economy.
- A shift to ecosystem based management, with an emphasis on First Nation land use planning.
- Our elected officials are better educated about forest management and the link to communities.
- Appurtenancy, in some form, needs to be brought back.

Although not discussed at each meeting, when it was raised, the mismanagement and the lack of public input into logging on private land was clearly upsetting and a strong source of frustration. There needs to be a review of private land legislation, particularly as it relates to public consultation.

***Given this situation, what would bring you hope?***

- Business and government realizing they haven't the social license to manage the way they are now.
- More conversations about what we are for, not what we are against.
- A culture shift in government to listen to us, to change FRPA, to staff and fund land use planning to the level required, and to have serious conversations about protecting old growth.
- The urgency of climate forcing change in government policy and decision-making.
- Ecosystem integrity becoming the basis for management.
- A stronger public consciousness about the need to conserve old growth, and stop clear cuts.
- Indigenous people, particularly youth, reconnecting with the land and what that means to their culture and their future.
- A media that covers this important story.
- A sense of collaboration and pride returning to our community – particularly about water and watersheds conservation.
- Community woodlots are expanded and managed for the region and other community values, beyond commercial harvesting.

The community conversations also identified issues that reflected region-specific concerns and interests, for example: the grasslands interface and the value of range; the recognition that restoration can be a key to community stability and economic security; a review of stumpage; the need to bring back forest extension and education; the importance of full cost accounting to recognize the economic case for saving old growth trees and conserving watersheds; illegal ATV/snowmobile use; and the harm that forest harvesting is bringing to public recreation trails.

**Summary**

People are concerned about the urgency of climate change. In turn, they are disappointed and frustrated by the seeming lack of action and slow pace of government to reform forest management and achieve the full range of values from our forests. People talked about wanting certainty and how healthy communities need healthy forests. People want to get away from 'that old, tired debate of jobs vs environment' as they fully understand that conserving nature and keeping jobs support one another.

There was an understanding about the importance of staying in touch with nature and ensuring that our children and youth get outside and build within themselves a sense of joy for what nature brings. Too few people realize the health benefits of being outside and understand the connection between ecological health and human health.

As the meetings concluded participants reflected on the value of 'meetings like this' and 'that we don't do this often enough'. It is important that there be 'safe settings for these difficult conversations'; where options and alternatives can be discussed; where people can 'agree to disagree'; where you can have conversations that are interest-based, not position-based, that help you find 'that community bargain' that is so essential to building trust and providing certainty.