

John Horgan
Premier of B.C.

Andrew Wilkinson
Leader of the Official Opposition

Andrew Weaver
Leader of the B.C. Green Party

Sept. 16, 2019

Re: B.C. forest sector and the impact on families and communities

Dear Premier Horgan, Mr. Wilkinson and Mr. Weaver

On behalf of the Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce and its 500-plus members, I wish to express concern about the worsening situation within B.C.'s forest sector.

Mill operations are either being shut down or curtailed, impacting thousands of workers and their families as well as those associated with private contractors and suppliers. Given the uncertainty, these individuals are less likely to make major purchases such as vehicles or homes, or to visit their favourite restaurant as often. That directly affects small businesses that are the very lifeblood of communities like Vernon.

The Chamber understands that complex factors fuel the current situation, including fibre supply and global competition. However, those complexities should not stand in the way of finding solutions that assist companies, workers and communities over the short and long-term.

Specifically, a broad-based, collaborative approach could review the current stumpage price in B.C. as well as the process used to determine them. It is our understanding that stumpage costs in B.C. are five times higher than Alberta. It is also important to look at other factors impacting business, including the Employer Health Tax.

What we are requesting is that the interests of British Columbians be the priority, even if that means setting aside differences. Now is the time for a broad-based approach to resolving the current crisis and establishing a sustainable forest sector for years to come. We would urge your respective parties to join together with representatives from forest companies, contractors, labour, business organizations, First Nations and communities to develop a made-in-B.C. strategy.

British Columbia's greatest resource is its people. We are innovative, risk-takers and resilient. History has shown that we can overcome great odds when we are shoulder-to-shoulder. More unites us than divides us, and our Chamber is ready to cooperate with all stakeholders, and particularly your respective parties, to meet this current challenge head-on.

We look forward to your response and please let us know when we can get to work.

Sincerely,



Krystin Kempton, President

Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

CC:

Stewart Phillip, Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs President

Eric Foster, Vernon-Monashee MLA

Doug Donaldson, B.C. Forests Minister

Brad Thorlakson, Tolko Industries President

Susan Yurkovich, Council of Forest Industries President

Stephen Hunt, United Steelworkers Director

Todd Chamberlain, Interior Logging Association General Manager

Arjun Singh, Union of B.C. Municipalities President

Val Litwin, B.C. Chamber of Commerce President

Kevin Acton, Regional District of North Okanagan Chair

Mike Richardson, Truck Loggers Association president

Lori Mindnich, Southern Interior Local Government Association President

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