



Sept 2024

Briefing Note / Executive Summary to: All Provincial MLA Candidates in the 2024 Election

PROPOSAL

Protecting Communities and Nature with a New BC Forest Act

ISSUE

Decades of overcutting from industrial logging have resulted in enormous losses of primary natural forests in BC. These losses and the current industrial forest system have come with major costs.

Natural ecosystems function fully and flawlessly without industrialized activities on them. Fully functioning natural systems ensure our survival and are the source of what we value. Halting the loss and degradation of natural forest ecosystems and restoring forest landscapes helps enhance climate change mitigation and disaster protection. It also drives sustainable economic growth and supports livelihoods.

Current provincial legislation and policies protect private interests. In this time of climate uncertainty, extreme weather events, and increasing disasters, the conservation of BC’s primary forests and restoration of forest landscapes is essential. Our laws must preserve *‘the power of forests’* and all the benefits for which we value them.

At this point in time, **the appropriate political decision** is for the BC government, on behalf of citizens, to take back control of public lands from private companies. This must be addressed now - for the sake of public safety, for the BC economy, and so that our children have a future.

BACKGROUND

The devastating outcomes include more floods, drought, fires, and landslides, including a deadly slide at Duffey Lake that killed 5 people. The BC government has been blaming global climate change for these disasters. However, the increase in the frequency and magnitude of these disasters can be directly and indirectly linked to industrial logging.

The provincial government **may not be able to control the global climate** but it can control logging on public land in BC. One of the most effective actions the BC government can take to protect BC residents, economically and physically, is to preserve what is left of primary forests and embark on ecological restoration of most of the rest (with some logging under ecological management).

Billions of taxpayer dollars are being spent on reacting to disasters rather than preventing them. In 2021, BC was beset by three extreme weather disasters: an unprecedented heat dome, devastating wildfires, and an atmospheric river and flooding. A study found that the costs to BC’s economy from



these events are estimated to be between \$10.6 and \$17.1 billion¹. Lost wages were estimated to be between \$1.5 to \$2.6 billion.

In 2023, wildfires in the Shuswap and Okanagan caused more than \$720 million in insured losses, making it BC's costliest event ever. The BC budget for fighting wildfires doubled from \$1.02 billion between 2010-2014 to \$2.12 billion between 2015-2019.²

There has been a massive increase in fires in all areas of BC (except Vancouver Island) over the past 10 years. The escalation in the southern interior of BC is particularly shocking. All of the big fires in the southern interior burned thousands of hectares of clearcuts and plantations.

PROPOSED CHANGES

The New Forest Act is intended to ensure that forest management on public lands focuses on the interests of communities and nature rather than on extraction interests. Under this new legislation, the primary objective of forest management will be to maintain the ecological integrity of forest ecosystems. The new system will bolster and stabilize community economies while diversifying and strengthening the broader BC economy. When we put nature first, the people will benefit.

The existing Forest Act would be gradually repealed, along with the Forest and Range Practices Act and the Private Managed Forest Land Act. All existing licenses would be dissolved when their five-year renewal comes up, permitting a gradual transition to the system. This would give the forest industry and communities time to adjust.

Under the new Forest Act, the structure, support, and relationships are centered around Community Forest Boards (CFB) which operate under the principles of Nature-Directed Stewardship which is a form of ecological management. Development of CFBs will require organizational change and the creation of new government agencies. These are described in the proposal along with mechanisms for legislation transformation.

By enacting brand new legislation that implements an ecological model of forest management, the Provincial government has an opportunity to put British Columbians to work in meaningful careers conserving forest ecosystems while positioning itself as a leader in climate mitigation and adaptation. The New Forest Act can also help to make real BC's commitment to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA).

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS AND BY WHO

All Provincial MLA Candidates in the 2024 Election, are requested to present this proposal to your party, riding organizations, and constituents - using the [New Forest Act Proposal](#) & [Backgrounder](#) submitted to you by the Power of the Forests Campaigners.

¹ A Climate Reckoning: The economic costs of BC's extreme weather in 2021, BY MARC LEE & BEN PARFITT, November 2022, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

² Broadland, D. Clearcut logging increases forest fire risk. Evergreen Alliance. Oct 15, 2021. <https://www.evergreenalliance.ca/portal-increase-in-forest-fire-hazard/1/>