

## **BRIEFING NOTE / EXECUTIVE SUMMARY to:** All Provincial MLAs

### **PROPOSAL**

A New Forest Act to Revitalize BC's Forest Industry: A Community- and Ecology- Driven Approach to Forest Management

### **ISSUE**

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British Columbia's forestry sector is in crisis. Over the past 20 years, more than 55,000 forestry jobs have been lost and over 80 sawmills have closed. Harvest levels continue to drop—not due to conservation but because overcutting has degraded forests and reduced timber quality. Meanwhile, forestry's contribution to BC's GDP has steadily declined, leaving rural communities with fewer jobs, struggling economies, and costly environmental disasters like floods, droughts, and wildfires.

The **New Forest Act** offers a practical, community-centered solution to reverse these trends and gives priority to long-term ecological sustainability over short-term timber exploitation. By boosting value-added industries, creating restoration jobs, and empowering Indigenous and local communities in decision-making, this proposal strengthens local economies and ensures forests remain a long-term ecological and economic asset. It puts into practice recommendations from the *Strategic Old Growth Panel Review* and the *Biodiversity and Economic Health Framework*.

This reform doesn't limit forestry—it maximizes its potential for communities by generating stable, diverse employment and fostering economic resilience. The New Forest Act positions BC as a leader in innovative, community-driven and ecologically sustainable forest management while creating stronger, self-reliant local economies.

### **BACKGROUND**

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#### **Challenges with Current Practices**

##### **1. Ecological Degradation:**

- Loss of 3.9 million hectares of forest cover (2001–2019) due to industrial logging
- Increased vulnerability to wildfires, floods, and landslides caused by clear-cutting and monoculture plantations.
- [“By B.C.’s own reporting](#): “forests are the largest emitters of greenhouse gases in the province—23 per cent larger than the total emissions from the energy sector”.

##### **2. Economic and Social Impacts:**

- The cost of forestry to BC taxpayers is [\\$3.65 million a year](#).
- High costs of disaster recovery linked to clearcuts, tree plantations, and forest roads which change the forest hydrology and also create more flammable conditions (e.g., [\\$720 million in wildfire losses in 2023](#), over [\\$10 billion from the 2021](#) atmospheric river, heat dome, and fires).

##### **3. Public good sidelined**

- Tenure system prioritizes corporate profits over public good.

- Lack of accountability for unsustainable practices.
- Costly for taxpayers: The current system burdens BC residents instead of generating public revenues.

## PROPOSED SOLUTIONS UNDER THE NEW FOREST ACT

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### 1. Prioritize Ecosystem Integrity:

- **Nature-Directed Stewardship:** Forest management will prioritize biodiversity, water conservation, and climate resilience.
- **Three-Zone Management Framework:**
  - **Zone 1 – Protection Forest:** Protects primary forests from extractive activities and are removed from the Timber Harvesting Land Base.
  - **Zone 2 – Restoration Forest:** For ecological restoration of secondary forests/previously logged forests to provide the basis for future primary forests. Protected from extractive activities and are removed from the Timber Harvesting Land Base.
  - **Zone 3 - Working Forest:** Allows ecologically sustainable forestry, using partial-cutting methods based on Nature-Directed Stewardship in secondary forests/previously logged forests.

### 2. Establish Community-Based Decision-Making:

- **Community Forest Boards:** Comprised of local and Indigenous representatives to oversee forest management based in the principles of Nature-Directed Stewardship.
- Establishment of a **Ministry of Ecosystem Integrity** to replace the current Ministry of Forests.
- Creation of independent science and Indigenous knowledge panels to guide policy.

### 3. Rebuild Community-Based Economies:

- A recognition that successful human economies are dependent on thriving natural ecosystems.
- Shift focus from raw and dimension-lumber exports to value-added wood products, eco-tourism, and non-timber sectors.
- Establish valid log markets through regional log sort yards to ensure fair and accurate valuation of public timber.
- Incentivize small-to-medium enterprises in forestry, restoration, and conservation (include Indigenous Guardians and stewardship programs).

## Expected Benefits

### 1. Environmental:

- Prevention of, and enhanced resilience to natural disasters by protecting natural forest ecosystem integrity.
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions through protection of carbon-storing primary forests and restoration of secondary forests.

### 2. Economic

- **Strengthened Regional Economies:** Decentralized forest management stabilizes local economies
- **Job Creation Across Sectors:**
  - Restoration work
  - Eco-tourism
  - Non-timber forest products, such as mushrooms, flowers, and medicinals
  - Science, planning, management, education, and training for new methods
  - Monitoring and compliance, including more local forest offices, Forest Rangers, and Indigenous Guardians
  - Small-to-mid-sized local businesses in partial-cutting forestry (creating at least 4x more jobs), value-added manufacturing, and wood-based industries and crafts
  - Regional Log Sort Yards
- **Enhanced Subsistence Economies:** Supports traditional activities like hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering which makes rural communities more self-reliant and reduces poverty.

### 3. Social:

- Strengthened local and Indigenous participation in forest governance.
- Improved water and air quality, benefiting all British Columbians.
- Climate moderation through protection and restoration of the ecological integrity and biodiversity of natural forests.

## CONCLUSION

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The **New Forest Act** offers a transformative vision for forestry in BC, balancing ecological integrity, community needs, and economic stability. With a phased five-year transition leveraging existing expertise, the plan ensures an orderly, manageable shift that strengthens rather than disrupts the forest sector.

This approach aligns with what British Columbians value: ecologically intact forests, strong local economies, and sustainable forest practices. Surveys show [broad support](#), including from forestry workers, for policies that protect forests while creating well-paying, local jobs.

By adopting this framework via new legislation, BC can position itself as a leader in ecologically sustainable resource management and climate change resilience, ensuring the wellbeing of current and future generations.

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## IMMEDIATE ACTIONS AND BY WHO

All Provincial MLAs are requested to download and read the [New Forest Act proposal](#) and present it to your party.

### Contact

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