

FOREST LANDS SUSTAINABILITY GOVERNANCE MODEL

A New Conceptual Framework

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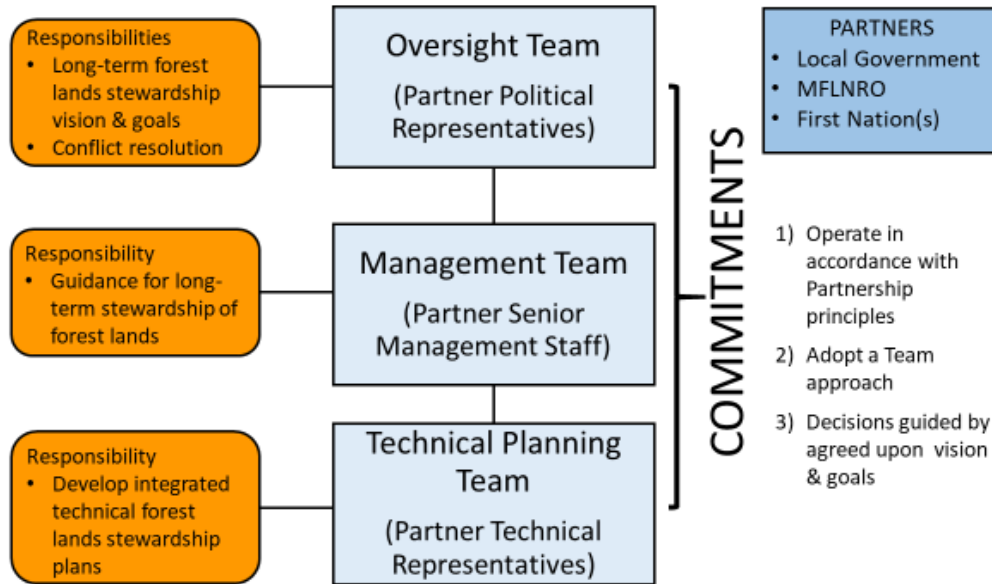
The dissatisfaction with the current forest management decision-making system has been actively discussed for over two decades, commonly in the form of tenure reform and more local/community control. Tenure reform is complex, messy and not of interest to Government or the forest industry. The recommendations in regard to local/community control would usually require radical changes to the current system. Again these are not of interest to the key governing bodies and consequently, discounted. If success is to be achieved in modifying the system to include more local/community influence in strategic forest management decision-making, it will have to be accomplished within the existing system.

Local Governments **CAN** influence forest land management decision-making through both their mandates and access to existing instruments as the “keeper of the social license.” A mechanism for meaningful engagement on a continuous basis within the community and with decision-makers is essential for sustainable influence. Establishing a new governance model for local forest strategic decision-making is a tool to consider. This has been discussed with Government in a few areas of BC with a positive response and resulting in lessons learned for future initiatives.

The conflicts between forest Licensee plans and community expectations is becoming more commonplace, reflecting the Provincial, National and international trend toward more local influence on long-term resource management affecting local people. Conditions across BC and within communities suggest flexibility is needed when developing a Governance Model as a component of moving toward community resiliency. Working within the existing basic framework structure has a greater potential for Government to accept specific local differences than radicle changes. It is best to walk before you run.

The proposed Model described in this paper is advisory in nature, a critical component in obtaining potential Government and industry acceptance. Working within existing legislation, the proposed framework shown below is a Partnership model involving three (3) major Partners (i.e., Local Government, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations [MFLNRO] and First Nations).

RECOMMENDED GOVERNANCE MODEL FRAMEWORK



The Model is intended to reflect:

- Improved effectiveness of administration, management and development of the forest resource;
- A Partnership to advise Statutory Decision-Makers (SDM) on strategic activities;
- A Government focus on regulatory activities;
- A Partnership to provide direction, without fettering the discretion of the SDM in the management of the local forest lands;
- Maintenance of key SDM responsibilities but operating within the Governance Model; and
- Operating within the requirements of existing relevant Acts.

The Partnership is expected to operate with an agreed upon set of principles, such as:

- A general consensus approach will be used in decision-making;
- All Partners are committed to work together with a goal of long-term forest stewardship using an agreed upon vision and goals for local forests;
- All Partners will work towards creation of a culture of innovation and “out of the box” thinking;
- The Partnership is an advisory body providing recommendations to the SDM;
- Discussions and decisions are made with respect for the opinions and interests of all team members;
- Business will be conducted using a collaborative, lean and cost-effective administrative model that complements and avoids duplication of Partner administration and programs;
- Decisions and recommendations will be within existing Provincial Acts effecting the management of forest lands within BC;
- Partners will work together to identify areas for improvement;

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- Public transparency will be a cornerstone for the management of local forest lands; and
- Decision-making will avoid increasing the regulatory burden on local forest lands resource development.

STEPS TO ADOPTING NEW GOVERNANCE MODEL

Adopting a new Governance Model for the local forests associated with a Local Government requires acceptance by the Provincial Government (i.e., MFLNRO). This will only be achieved if the Local Government and First Nations take a leadership role in promoting a Model that fits their conditions and meets the needs and requirements of the other Partners and MFLNRO. The proposed Framework was designed as a guide to meet this test. The following are steps required to move forward on such an initiative, keeping in mind this is a journey not an event (i.e., it will take time to fully implement):

- 1) Local Government:
 - a) Agreeing to move forward on this journey,
 - b) Obtaining support from local non-government Partner(s),
 - c) Informing local MFLNRO staff of the initiative and the support from Partners, and
 - d) Obtaining input from key community organizations.
- 2) Meeting with local and possibly regional MFLNRO staff to get their input and potentially support regarding the initiative to develop and implement a new Governance Model.
- 3) Developing the vision and goals for the local forests with the Partners.
- 4) Developing a concept Model proposal for submission to the Minister of FLNRO.
- 5) Submitting the proposal to the Minister of FLNRO with:
 - a) A request for a meeting, and
 - b) A recommendation that the details of the concept model be more fully developed with the MFLNRO and Partners.

It may appear that embarking on such an initiative will involve resources (financial and staff) currently not available. This may be the case to some extent. However, it should be compared with those being applied under the current model and the impacts on the community without this leadership in moving toward resiliency.

BENEFITS OF THE MODEL

Implementation of the proposed Governance Model has the potential for the following Partner benefits:

Government

- Building on-going, positive working relationships with First Nations and communities,
- Minimizing resource management conflicts within the local forest lands,
- Providing a cost effective and independent public consultation process,

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- Providing assistance in meeting provincial long-term forest stewardship goals and objectives,
- Providing clarity regarding community and First Nations long-term forest stewardship vision and goals, and
- Implementing Government commitments to community economic development and First Nations relationship building.

Communities

- Identifying, explicitly, a community vision and goals for local forest lands that includes input from all the Partners and guides development of long-term forest stewardship plans,
- Influencing forest lands decision-making,
- Building on-going, positive working relationships with Government, First Nations and industry, and
- Contributing to movement toward building a resilient community through a Government and industry supported forest resource related economic diversity plan.

First Nations

- Building on-going, positive working relationships with Government, communities and industry,
- Influencing forest lands decision-making,
- Participating in a collaborative and constructive process that includes First Nations values and desired forest land stewardship outputs, and
- Building resilient First Nations communities through:
 - Increasing economic development and diversification opportunities
 - Ensuring long-term stewardship of local forest lands.

Forest companies

- Building on-going, positive working relationships with First Nations and communities,
- Providing a consistent and constructive consultation process within the community to support forest certification requirements,
- Providing clarity regarding community and First Nations long-term forest stewardship vision and goals for use in developing forest stewardship plans,
- Providing community and First Nations support for social license,
- Minimizing forest management development conflicts and delays, and
- Providing an efficient and effective public consultation process that reduces overall and long-term costs