

PRESS RELEASE

BEYOND THE BEETLE: A mid-term timber supply action plan

HFHC Coordinator response

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The recently released Mid-Term Timber Supply Action Plan by the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO) is disappointing at best and sends a clear message of defensiveness.

The Legislative Special Committee on Timber Supply provided 19 recommendations related to forest management within the Mountain Pine Beetle heavily impacted areas of Interior BC, plus one specifically related to Burns Lake issues. The limited Terms of Reference of the Committee prevented innovative recommendations related to key issues regarding the future of BC forests identified by experts and communities through the *Healthy Forests-Healthy Communities* (HFHC) initiative. However, the response by the MFLNRO further marginalized priority actions to move towards a desired future forest. In all fairness, if Government is not willing to provide more resources to the Ministry or accept re-prioritization of effort, it does limit their response. There is no mention of either of these in the plan.

The MFLNRO response to the 19 recommendations included: 12 that maintained the status quo of operations and policy; 5 were accepted in whole; and 2 identified some positive planned action. The status quo responses focused on statements by the Ministry that these recommended actions have been on-going. If this was the case, why did the Committee not just recommend continuing what is being done? The Committee was well supported by Ministry staff and former Chief Foresters who would or should have informed them of on-going activities. The Ministry appears to be defensive on this issue.

The positive responses to recommendations included: “developing a framework for a science-based review of sensitive areas” and the creation of an industry-ministry committee to look for ways to “grow more fibre.” These are welcomed but with no details it is hard to generate full support. The Ministry accepted recommendations were in the areas of Allowable Annual Cut procedural issues, infrastructure opportunities and continued funding for tree improvement. All of these are welcome public commitments.

It is encouraging the Ministry identified a commitment to on-going work developing the Type 4 silviculture strategies and frameworks for community engagement and science-based review of sensitive areas, partitioning of marginally economic stand types, building criteria for assessing areas suitable for reforestation and piloting wildfire landscape-level fuel break planning. However, the commitments in these areas are general in nature, focus on pilots, defer broad scale action and lack details that would provide confidence the actions will result in positive changes and off-set the high percentage of status quo responses. Overall the plan does not provide the necessary confidence the Ministry is adequately addressing the mid-term timber supply issues related to the future of BC forests and communities.

Direct enquiries to info@bcforestconversation.com or calling the initiative Coordinator, Bill Bourgeois (604 924-0765 or 604 836-0765)