



## FORESTWISE

The BC Forests Society Newsletter

### WINTER 2007

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## INTRODUCTION

A brief look back at 2007 shows that we have reached a crossroads in BC forestry. The traditional short-term band-aid approaches have not worked; we must learn to think and act for the long term health of our forests and forest-dependent communities. We need to learn from our mistakes and move forward with full and open participation by interested people with ideas about how to rebuild a fallen forest sector.



The Forests Society will contribute to the debate under our banner 'Forests 21' and we hope that you will join us as we work for change.

If you have letters, ideas, questions, or suggestions, please contact us:  
[forestwise@shaw.ca](mailto:forestwise@shaw.ca)

## SOCIETY BUSINESS

The Society will be raising our profile between January and March 2008 by contacting many of the players in forestry in our province and introducing the Society. Our general goals are to increase the opportunities for meaningful discussion and debate about forestry, and raise the knowledge and comfort level of people, providing them with more confidence to participate. Also our membership initiative will continue in order to increase our numbers and our capacity to engage with the issues.

Please refer to our website for meeting minutes:  
[www.forestsociety.com/about.htm](http://www.forestsociety.com/about.htm)

## EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

Over the past decade, we have not done a good job of keeping our forest sector vibrant and healthy in both the public and private components. Government ministries in forests, fish, wildlife, water and other natural resources have shrunk and are losing their effectiveness. Their critical function of overseeing our forest lands for the public good is in jeopardy. Forest companies have been hit hard by tariffs, the high Canadian dollar, high oil prices and the pine beetle. They are being forced to adapt to these new circumstances.

We need to rethink the forestry systems in BC, both public and private. The recently announced Provincial Forestry Roundtable can be one of the

necessary components of rebuilding, but only if there are sufficient new players with fresh ideas, who can operate without interference. We are hopeful that the stakeholders can work together and move beyond traditional antagonistic attitudes. It's time for a different approach to forestry in BC.

We would support the creation of a public process to select the people for the Roundtable, with appointed experts as key support resources but not as sitting members. The Roundtable should report to Cabinet with full public disclosure. Keeping the Roundtable (or an offshoot of it) as a 'continual body' to monitor, revisit, change and improve our systems would also be helpful in the future.



## FEATURED ARTICLE:

# NEW POLICIES NEEDED FOR BC'S PUBLIC FORESTS

By Andrew Mitchell

Almost 100 years ago, in 1909, the Fulton Royal Commission on BC's forests got it right. Fulton was aware of the waste and abuse of forests that had occurred in other parts of North America under private ownership, and recommended that the forests of BC should be retained in public ownership as a conservation reserve for the long term benefit of BC communities. He recommended that the forests should be managed by an independent, professional Forest Service. He noted that a long time was required to institute sound policies of forest management and conservation, and advised to look after the forest as it would in return support thriving forest-dependent communities and a strong forest sector:

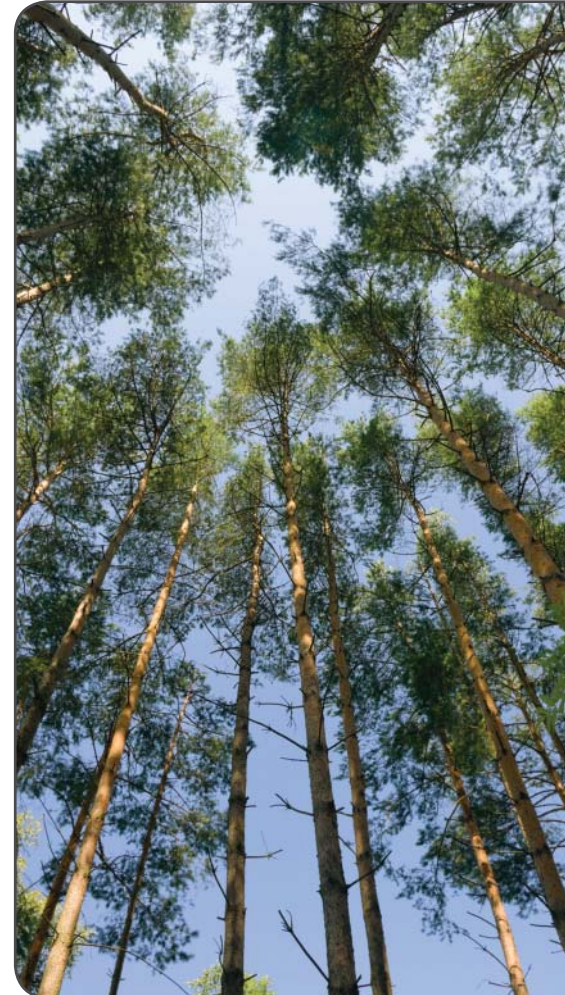
We are heirs to Fulton's legacy, BC has more forest under natural indigenous condition than any jurisdiction in North America. Our forests are not fragmented among many private owners. Therefore whole forest landscapes under public ownership can be placed under sustainable management to support an expanded forest sector that includes timber and non-timber forest products and nature-based economic activities.

Unfortunately, counter to Fulton's longer term vision, we are also heirs to forest policies focused on short term

economic growth or success. For more than half a century BC's forest policies have been focused on establishing and maintaining a thriving forest products industry. Conservation and sustainable stewardship have remained secondary. After World War II, our present tenure system of timber harvesting rights was initiated to encourage forest companies to build wood products manufacturing plants. It was successful in bringing economic development to BC but was hardly the best arrangement to ensure good stewardship of forest land and values over the long term.

A global environmental awakening emerged in the 1970's, resulting in international agreements on the environment. In the 1990's, Canada signed on to the Montreal Process, a conservation and sustainable forest management agreement. It emphasizes the need to conserve forest biodiversity, productive capacity and ecosystem processes, to sustain many different economic and social benefits. Forest tenure, laws and institutional infrastructure should consider aboriginal rights and provide for equitable use and treatment of all forest resources and values.

The industrial forest sector will claim that there have been great changes in forest policy to accommodate this new era of sustainable forest management –



environmental regulations, forest practice codes, expanded parks, greater public participation processes. However people should not be fooled by this 'green wash' on the surface. There has been no change at the heart of the matter – an unsuitable tenure system of timber harvesting rights remains at the core.

This tenure system makes timber 'king' in the treatment of our forests. Segments of society, including First Nations, interested in the environment and other forest

> *continued...*



## FEATURED ARTICLE (CONT'D): NEW POLICIES NEEDED

values are marginalized. Forest protests in BC have been the largest incidents of civil disobedience in Canada's history. This basic problem smolders, largely unresolved.

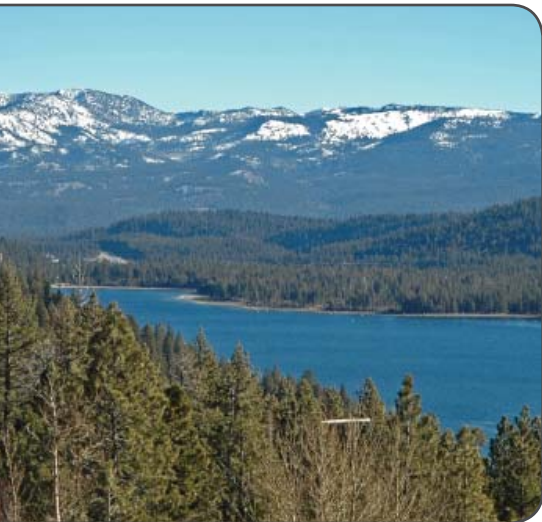
Another problem with the tenure system of harvesting rights is that it discourages open markets for public timber. This has made BC wood products vulnerable to discriminatory US tariffs. Present attempts to introduce a partial market may not remove this vulnerability. Secondary wood

manufacturing industries have also been impeded and this has meant further loss of money and jobs in the BC economy.

Public ownership of complete forest landscapes should give us the advantage of being able to organize integrated, independent stewardship that is attuned to local ecosystems and communities. Instead we have an inefficient system where stewardship responsibilities are fragmented between several forest companies and several government

agencies. A potential advantage has been turned into a shambles.

BC's public forests have the potential to sustain our forest-dependent communities and the economy of the province. However BC needs to re-engineer its forest stewardship arrangements. The primary focus should be the conservation and sustainable stewardship of BC's forests. This is the foundation on which to build and sustain a healthy forest sector. 🌲



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## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In BC for some time now, we have experienced an absence of meaningful opportunities for people to participate in the forestry discussion. Too many decisions about our public forests are being made without full public involvement and disclosure.

It's time for a new approach. It's time for open doors, reliable

forest information and meaningful community outreach.

We hope you'll join us as we call for a better way forward. Come out, get involved and have your voice heard!



WINTER 2007

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#### SUGGESTIONS:

Suggestions and comments are always welcome. Please send to: [hdrage@shaw.ca](mailto:hdrage@shaw.ca)



# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PROVINCE: \_\_\_\_\_

POSTAL CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

I/We support the Vision and Mission Statements of the Society, and agree to abide by the Constitution and Bylaws.

## SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP DUES (ANNUAL):

Individual: \$10

Family/Organization: \$25

Please specify if a paper receipt is required  
(e-mail receipt normally issued)

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_