



TASK FORCE ON BC TIMBER SALES

RECOMMENDATIONS

Prepared for the
Honourable Ravi Parmar,
BC Minister of Forests

Prepared by the Task
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Message from the Task Force

As the Task Force, we thank Minister Ravi Parmar for the opportunity to offer our ideas on strengthening BC Timber Sales (BCTS).

BCTS has been a key player in our province's forest industry since 2003. In forming this Task Force, the Minister asked us for bold and transformational recommendations for the change and revitalization of BC Timber Sales. With this understanding, Minister Parmar also set out seven broad goals to guide our work:

- Create forestry-sector growth, competition, and diversification;
- Provide predictable and reliable market access to fibre;
- Diversify access to fibre for the manufacturing sector, including value-added facilities;
- Strengthen partnerships with First Nations and communities;
- Provide more jobs for contractors, workers, and communities;
- Generate investment for the Province and its partners; and
- Lead in innovative, sustainable forest management and silviculture practices.

In carrying out this mandate, the Task Force was granted full independence to consult with the sector and evaluate the ideas for reforming BCTS. We are very appreciative of the extensive array of perspectives and experiences shared by individuals and organizations. Since January of 2025, we received over 300 email submissions and hosted over 50 virtual discussions with First Nations, individual companies, and industry associations. We thank them for their thoughtful feedback and constructive suggestions.

We appreciated the generous support and aid, when needed, from staff at the Ministry of Forests and BCTS. We thank Jennifer Kardynal, Amanda Fouty, Mikayla Neal, Terri Jonuk, Susan Lee, Allan Powelson, Allan Bennett, Melissa Sanderson, Derek Lefler, Tony Pesklevits, Chloe Burgess, Russ Laroche, Ingrid Brooker and Ariel Taylor and all who contributed their time and energy to this review.



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Background to the Review

The province started a review of BC Timber Sales (BCTS) in 2024 to decide if the organization was meeting its mandated commitments, as the operating environment and needs of the forestry industry change. To lead the review, an expert Task Force was set up in January of 2025.

Between January and June of 2025, participants from First Nations, industry, associations, government and the public shared their thoughts through more than 300 submissions by email, in over 50 virtual meetings with the Task Force and through the Provincial Forestry Forum.

Reasons for the Review

Forestry has been a cornerstone of British Columbia's growth, supporting communities for generations. In the past several decades, the sector has faced many challenges – market fluctuations, climate related insect outbreaks and catastrophic wildfires – coupled with public expectations. These create significant impacts on fibre supply and in turn on regional economies.

BCTS is a program administered by the Ministry of Forests operating in 33 communities across British Columbia. Since its establishment in 2003, it has played a vital role in the province's forest sector. BCTS currently manages, and markets, just under 20 percent of the province's annual allowable cut (AAC) of timber on Crown lands.

For decades, British Columbia's timber pricing system has faced periodic legal challenges from the United States. BCTS auctions are central to the province's pricing system and, as such, are core to British Columbia's defence against punitive trade measures. However, due to a variety of factors, the timber volume generated annually by BCTS has fallen dramatically in recent years, from 11.7 million cubic meters in 2020-2021 to 4.5 million cubic meters in 2024-2025.

In this context of ongoing trade uncertainty, land base changes, and shifting public expectations, the BCTS Review Task Force believes it is essential to maintain, and strengthen, the BCTS auction system and BCTS' role in proactive forest management, as leaders in this field. Although restoring BCTS to its full AAC will be complex, the Task Force is confident that the recommendations set out in this report provide a strong foundation for sustainable and forward-looking change.

BCTS must rebuild its social license by attracting investment and building investor confidence. It has an opportunity to align its practices with the principles of sustainable forest management, creating lasting, positive change for future generations. Stewardship and commerce have long coexisted on these lands, even before contact. The following recommendations aim to foster an environment where, by caring for the land, the land in turn will care for us.

What We Heard

Throughout this review, submissions from across British Columbia consistently emphasized that the province's forests are dynamic and diverse ecosystems. They are home to a rich array of trees, plants, animals, and other species, and are valued not only for their timber, but also for their environmental, cultural, social, and economic contributions. We also heard that BCTS has seen dramatic shifts in its operating environment since 2003 – declining AAC's, global economic volatility, a focus on reconciliation efforts, sustainability-based initiatives, and varying BCTS reviews.

We have heard from all parts of the forest sector that urgency is needed to deal with the challenges that currently exist. Given this, we believe it is critical for BCTS to prioritize our recommendations, identifying actions that can be completed within six months, as well as those achievable within two or more years. These themes, along with others that arose during the January to June 2025 engagement period, are summarized below.

Strengthening the BCTS Business Model

The Task Force received a wide range of thoughtful and constructive proposals aimed at strengthening the BCTS business model. However, there is debate over the right path forward, centred on the degree of independence BCTS should have from government to effectively fulfill its mandate. There were many recommendations to implement structural changes that would provide BCTS with greater operational independence, flexibility, accountability and long-term stability. Recommendations considered the complexity faced due to evolving public expectations and offer ways to improve collaboration and decision making with First Nations.

Partnering with First Nations

We heard broad agreement that the Government of British Columbia has demonstrated a commitment to reconciliation with First Nations and Indigenous peoples. Similarly, there was broad agreement that partnerships with First Nations contribute to land stewardship and provide an opportunity to stabilize forestry operations through predictive fibre flow mechanisms. In active forestry zones in BC there is a spectrum of forest activities pursued by First Nations. Many are actively pursuing forest management through timber harvesting as a form of stewardship and sustainable source of employment, and business development, while others emphasize the importance of preserving future opportunities and maintaining decision-making flexibility over their territories.

With 204 distinct First Nations in British Columbia, each with their own perspectives, priorities and aspirations, we heard a clear call for BCTS to be equipped with a more adaptable and responsive toolkit. This will enable the development and strengthening of meaningful partnerships that reflect and respect this diversity.

Optimizing the Working Forest

We heard many views about the current state of forest health in British Columbia and what defines a thriving forest industry. While many people spoke to the idea of “the right log, to the right mill, at the right time,” there was no consensus as to the best path to achieve this. We heard various suggestions on how to optimize the working forest, given the complexity of both the challenges and the opportunities ahead. These insights have shaped our recommendations, which aim to support both the long-term health of our forests and the sustainability of communities that depend on them. Optimizing the working forest will be a long term process. To achieve this goal, collaboration and decision making focused on a sustainable forest industry with strong stewardship principles are paramount.

Enhancing Forest Stewardship

British Columbians value our forests in different ways – whether as part of cultural traditions, for recreation, commercial use, ecological importance or simply as a natural environment or a sense of wonder. What unites us is a shared commitment to managing forests for both current and future generations. BCTS can and should play a critical role in shaping a new model for forest stewardship. Achieving this vision depends on stronger relationships and collaboration with First Nations, local communities, and industry. By working together as stewards of the land, we can ensure that the most benefit is gained from every tree now and into the future – providing social and environmental benefits, creating jobs, and strengthening communities across the province.

Building Resilient Communities and Sustaining Resources

BCTS plays a crucial role in supporting economic resilience in forest dependent communities by providing harvesting, hauling and silviculture jobs for local contractors and ensuring mills have a stable fibre supply. Climate change, extreme weather, wildfires, drought, and floods emerged as consistent themes throughout our discussions, reflecting widespread concern about the growing threats these pose to both communities and forest ecosystems across British Columbia. The 2021 Lytton wildfire was frequently used as an example of the devastating and long-lasting impacts such events can have.

We heard that BCTS has a meaningful opportunity, with the BC Wildfire Service and other partners, to play a proactive role in reducing the risks to British Columbia’s communities and resources. This role includes taking action in areas adjacent to homes and infrastructure, where the need for preventative measures is especially urgent.



Recommendations From the Task Force

We believe that all British Columbians have a vital interest in the future success of BCTS - economically, culturally, socially, and environmentally. We hope our recommendations, presented below, will help BCTS, the Government of British Columbia and partnering First Nations in achieving that shared success.

Pillar 1: Strengthening the BCTS Business Model

The year 2025 has underscored how rapidly shifting global politics and policy decisions can have immediate, significant and direct impacts on British Columbia's forest industry. The ongoing threat of punitive duties and tariffs remain a pressing concern, reinforcing the need for a credible and defensible Market Pricing System. This system is not only central to the BCTS mandate but is essential to the long-term health and economic sustainability of the forest sector.

Under the current BCTS system, getting the right log to the right mill or processing facility remains a challenge, particularly for untenured or minimally tenured operations. The system needs to better reflect local market dynamics and broader economic conditions and allow BCTS to operate with the same flexibility as a business focusing on stewardship and trade.

BCTS' business model has not evolved along with the shifting needs or expectations of the forest sector or society. There is an opportunity to modernize BCTS in a way that upholds the principles of independence, reconciliation, and financial sustainability and better positions BCTS to serve the needs of a changing industry and changing world.

Advancing a New BCTS Structure for Success

Recommendation 1: Develop a model for BCTS to operate at arm's length from government, to provide operational independence and partnership. Operating as a business allows for greater flexibility, enhanced decision-making authority, efficiency, and broader partnership opportunities.

Recommendation 2: Modernize and restructure BCTS to cultivate stronger partnerships with First Nations, in a manner that better reflects the intent of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and enhances collaboration and shared decision-making.

Recommendation 3: Where possible, share services across BCTS' Business Area (BA) boundaries, and create specialist teams that support and mentor BA staff in areas of need.

Enhancing the Auction House Model

Recommendation 4: Explore strategic partnerships to expand BCTS' role in delivering auction services to other tenure holders, helping to sustain the Market Pricing System by generating robust pricing data.

Recommendation 5: Work with industry to develop a strategy for ensuring that the Market Pricing System, through competitive auction, remains effective and defensible, especially during periods of lower market demand.

Recommendation 6: In consultation with First Nations, industry and auction experts, evolve BCTS into a full-service "auction house," offering a broader suite of services such as on-site or roadside chipping and grinding, log trading, auctioning developed timber, bundling timber sales with harvesting and site rehabilitation services, and operating a virtual log market.

Remaining Competitive Through Business Efficiencies

Recommendation 7: Optimize the use of Artificial Intelligence and digital technologies to improve on operational delivery.

Recommendation 8: Meet timber sale expectations through collaboration with licensees, contractors and First Nations to deliver auction-ready sale packages, while also aiming, where possible, to simplify policy, procedures, and contract language to enhance efficiency.

Recommendation 9: Strengthen how BCTS shares technology and data with partners, such as First Nations and communities. This includes the shared use of data to improve operations and capabilities.

Recommendation 10: Explore approaches to timber sales that reduce the potential for "no bid" sales, which includes the possible provision for second-line bids below the upset bid.

Recommendation 11: Review the BCTS Business Area structure to achieve business efficiency.



Pillar 2: Partnering with First Nations

Advancing reconciliation with First Nations in BC requires a fundamental shift in relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, one grounded in mutual respect, the recognition of inherent rights and a commitment to addressing historical injustices.

First Nations are calling for collaborative partnerships that prioritize forest stewardship and reflect their deep connection to the land. First Nations envision BCTS as a trusted partner, one that supports capacity building and facilitates the equitable generation, and sharing, of revenue from forestry activities.

As stewards of their territories, First Nations carry the responsibility for the wellbeing of their lands and all it sustains. BCTS must deepen its understanding of Indigenous interests and integrate these perspectives into its business approach. Building constructive, lasting relationships will depend on recognizing the distinct needs of each Nation, and developing partnership models that are flexible, respectful and responsive.

BCTS, in partnership with First Nations can unlock fibre opportunities and generate meaningful economic benefits for all partners.

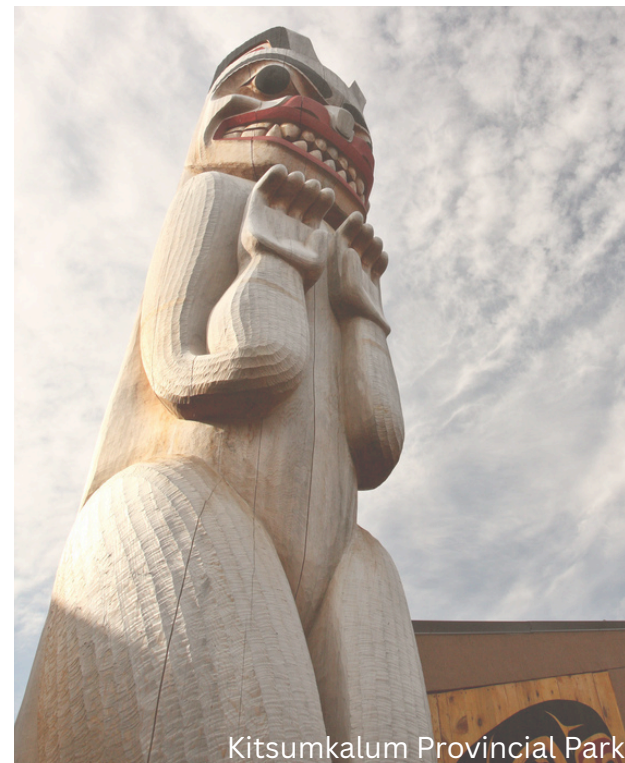
Having the Tools to be a Partner of Choice

Recommendation 12: Establish flexible, respectful, and responsive partnership models and tools, that recognize the distinct and diverse interests and values of each First Nation. These models should promote co-planning, co-management, and equitable sharing of benefits.

Recommendation 13: Design shared benefit arrangements with First Nations that are flexible and competitive, ensuring benefit agreements promote meaningful economic outcomes that align with forestry reconciliation partnerships and uphold First Nations' title and rights.

Recommendation 14: Support the expansion of opportunities for First Nations to develop and market their forest tenures through the BCTS auction system, where mutually beneficial.

Recommendation 15: Establish leadership in BCTS to focus on strategic relationships.



Pillar 3: Optimizing the Working Forest

Balancing timber harvesting with other forest management objectives has never been more important than it is today. The current mandate of the BCTS does not place enough of an emphasis on land stewardship, wildfire recovery, unlocking economic potential in low-value or high-cost stands, and making best use of available timber. Efforts to expand access to fibre and accurately reflect the costs and value of stands being brought to auction is an opportunity that BCTS must capitalize on.

The economic viability of using fibre across a range of facilities – from small scale operations to pulp mills – is challenged by high operating and transportation costs. Harvesting of low-value stands can support secondary users, create opportunities for First Nations, and contribute to forest regeneration.

BC's high-value, low-volume producers are often frustrated by their limited access to fibre, including the amount of volume available to value-added manufacturers. Eligibility requirements make it difficult for some value-added operations to participate in the program. Many small manufacturers do not want to harvest timber and only need access to a small volume of logs or lumber each year to sustain and grow their facilities.

Ensuring Predictable, Reliable and Diverse Access to Fibre

Recommendation 16: Create a strategy, in collaboration with First Nations, local communities, and industry partners, to advance the efficient and sustainable use of all available fibre and build a standing inventory equivalent to 24 months of Annual Allowable Cut.

Recommendation 17: Establish provincial volume sales targets of a minimum of 6 million cubic metres in 2026, increasing gradually to 7 million cubic metres in 2027, 8 million cubic metres in 2028, and reaching 9 million cubic metres by 2029.

Recommendation 18: In order to grow fibre availability on the open market in the next 12 months, work with willing partners to purchase and auction developed permits and enter into log supply agreements.

Recommendation 19: To facilitate prompt access to compromised timber stands, enhance contractor engagement, and expedite the introduction of additional fibre to the market, BCTS should initiate the auction of undeveloped timber sales.

Recommendation 20: Identify and develop opportunities on non-provincial forest lands.

Strengthening Sales Diversity

Recommendation 21: Assess the feasibility of establishing roadside log sort yards and/or a virtual log market in support of the operational needs of untenured small-scale producers in accessing varying volumes and profiles of logs rather than standing trees.

Recommendation 22: Update the eligibility criteria for Category 4 sales to include custom cutters and processors who operate using facilities they do not own, subject to their showing consistent use of fibre.

Recommendation 23: Ensure that a portion of volume is available to untenured and/or minimally tenured value-added operators—particularly mid-sized operators with an annual allowable cut in the general range of 10,000 to 300,000 cubic metres.

Recommendation 24: Explore ways to grow volume in the Category 4 program through partnership and volume acquisition.



Maximizing Marginal Harvest Opportunities

Recommendation 25: Develop a plan for identifying and enabling the sale of low-value stands, in collaboration with First Nations and industry, to aid in stand recovery and fibre flow. In addition, create cross-Business Area teams that can help achieve this.

Recommendation 26: Eliminate or waive the three-sale limit for marginal to low valued stands, or other circumstances where expedited harvest and/or unrestricted access makes sense.

Recommendation 27: Develop a collaborative plan with First Nations and industry on access to high value but remote stands (isolated timber).

Recommendation 28: Ensure maximum utilization of harvested residual material by expanding the oriented waste decking (i.e., “pile neatly”) requirement and marketing residual material to all business areas with adequate secondary users of residual material.

Pillar 4: Enhancing Forest Stewardship

Forest stewardship today faces far more challenges compared to 2003 when the BCTS program was first established. As it exists today, BCTS is not fully equipped to navigate the increasingly complex operating environment or to meet the evolving needs of future generations. BCTS has a vital role to play in ensuring the long-term stewardship of British Columbia's forests – managing them not just for today, but for generations to come.

By aligning operations with the principles of sustainability, BCTS can safeguard forest ecosystems while also supporting a credible and transparent market pricing system, as well as providing a stable and predictable supply of fibre to sustain a diverse and resilient sector into the future. To ensure the program is ready for tomorrow, policies should focus on strengthening community and ecosystem resilience, reducing wildfire risk, creating economic opportunities for First Nations while respecting their cultural values, and restoring degraded forests. This includes timely salvage of burned or damaged timber, innovative approaches such as the strategic placement of diverse stands of trees and integrating traditional ecological knowledge into recovery and resiliency.

When combined with other means of reducing wildfire risk, these practices offer powerful tools for forest resilience - and BCTS is well positioned to lead the way.

Forest stewardship should follow the recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review, the Old Growth "From Review to Action" and any other forestry initiative that lends itself to good forest stewardship like the new Forest landscape Planning program.

Protecting and Managing the Future Forests

Recommendation 29: Transition BCTS from a volume-based model of forest management to an area-based approach to enable multi-generational forest stewardship through practicing full rotation management.

Recommendation 30: As part of practicing multi-generational forest stewardship to support wildfire risk reduction, forest health, range rehabilitation, fibre utilization and other public interest objectives, adopt innovative and advanced, multi-phased harvesting approaches that support partial harvesting and commercial thinning.

Recommendation 31: To improve fire resistance and land base resiliency, use a variety of climate-adapted, deciduous, and native tree species in reforestation.

Recommendation 32: Digital innovation should be used to achieve public interest objectives, such as monitoring pests and diseases, assessing wildfire vulnerability, maximizing silviculture treatments, improving operations continuously, and operating cost effectively.

Strengthening Monitoring, Compliance and Enforcement

Recommendation 33: To ensure Timber Sale Licence (TSL) holders fulfill their legal and stewardship obligations, build upon the Forest Professional Oversight and Certification framework to enforce compliance through new tools and approaches.

Recommendation 34: Mandate TSL holders carry out their activities in a way that meets the terms and conditions of their license, associated harvest and road plans, and makes sure that stewardship objectives are met across all operational phases.



Pillar 5: Building Resilient Communities and Sustaining Resources

Symptoms of climate change, such as wildfires, flooding, and other extreme weather events, pose escalating threats to Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities throughout British Columbia. These impacts are not only environmental but also social and economic, disrupting livelihoods, damaging infrastructure, and threatening cultural and ecological values. Addressing these growing risks requires broad, collaborative partnerships that bring together governments, First Nations, industry, and local communities.

Some BC communities face greater vulnerability to wildfire and flooding than others, due to factors like topography, forest composition, and proximity to water bodies. BCTS must deepen its understanding of these localized risks and tailor its planning and operations accordingly. Over the past eight years, significant areas of forest have been lost to wildfire, and flood events have become more frequent and severe, further degrading forest health and increasing the risk of landslides and erosion. These challenges present an opportunity for BCTS to leverage its operational capacity to proactively manage forests for both fuel reduction and watershed resilience.

Experience with the Logan Lake Community Forest has shown that revenues generated from effective forest management can be reinvested into wildfire risk reduction and community preparedness. This model demonstrates how community forests can serve as key partners in building climate resilience while supporting local economies. By working closely with community forests and Indigenous-led stewardship initiatives, BCTS can help create sustainable economic opportunities for workers and communities, particularly in rural and forest-dependent regions.

Strong land stewardship will be essential in building meaningful First Nation partnerships and earning broader public trust. By integrating wildfire and flood risk reduction into its planning framework, BCTS can contribute to more resilient landscapes, healthier ecosystems, and more secure communities. At the same time, these efforts can support local jobs, local contracting, and skills development, ensuring that climate adaptation strategies also deliver tangible economic benefits.

Protecting Communities from Wildfire

Recommendation 35: Prioritize BCTS operations, including in those parts of the province outside the BCTS Operating Areas, to lower wildfire risks in collaboration with BC Wildfire Service and other tenure holders and land managers. These areas in which BCTS operates should be referred to as ‘areas of operation’.

Recommendation 36: In collaboration with the BC Wildfire Service, the Forest Enhancement Society of BC, First Nations, and other partners, develop technology-supported modelling to assess wildfire vulnerability around communities and inform mitigation strategies.

Recommendation 37: Undertake operational projects that bring together the goals of wildfire mitigation, salvage, and rehabilitation, building on the successful partnership models that already exist within British Columbia.

Recommendation 38: Where feasible and where spatial interests align, work with BC Parks, the BC Wildfire Service and First Nations, to actively manage wildfire risk adjacent to and within BC Parks.

Recommendation 39: Develop an integrated model for wildfire risk mitigation governance, planning and implementation in the wildland-urban interface, including areas managed by BCTS, enabling effective coordinated and collaborative action among First Nations, local governments, area-based tenure holders, districts and BCTS. This model should include innovative models for local delivery.

Recommendation 40: When planning the deactivation of forest roads and bridges, efforts should be made to maintain access for wildfire response, and opportunities for BCTS to support this access should be explored where other operators are not in a position to do so.

Recommendation 41: When BCTS partners with Community Forests and First Nations through forest management agreements, priority should be given to addressing wildfire risks in wildland-urban interface areas surrounding communities.

Providing Economic Opportunities for Communities and Workers

Recommendation 42: Develop timber sales to meet the needs of the local and regional forest industry as it relates to volume and species to support ‘right log to the right mill at the right place at the right price’.

Recommendation 43: Reserve a specific volume and profile of the stand inventory from identified TSLs on certain Category 1 sales for reauction to the value-add sector to support very small value-add producers and where a local need is identified.

Recommendation 44: Collaborate with First Nations, the Forest Enhancement Society of BC, and licensees to enable expedited wildfire salvage and returning lands to healthy growth and productivity.

Partnering with Community Forests

Community Forests play a vital role in advancing sustainable forest management, supporting local economies and reflecting the values and priorities of the people who live closest to the land. As place-based, locally governed entities, they bring unique knowledge, flexibility and innovation to forest management. Strengthening partnerships between BCTS and community forests presents a valuable opportunity to align provincial objectives with community led solutions.

Recommendation 45: Expand the opportunities for Community Forests to develop and market their forest tenures through the BCTS auction system, where desired by both parties.

Recommendation 46: Provide for flexible, respectful and responsive partnership options that recognize the distinct and diverse interests of each Community Forest. When possible, partnership models should encourage co-planning, co-management, and fair sharing of benefits.



Additional Considerations for the Ministry of Forests

While the following recommendations fall outside of the formal scope of the BCTS review, the Task Force believes they are essential to driving meaningful change across British Columbia's forest sector. These proposals support, and align, with the recommendations already discussed throughout this report, particularly related to reconciliation, climate resilience, sustainable forest stewardship, economic diversification, and strength in our trade position, and should be considered as part of a broader strategy for sector wide transformation.

Recommendation 47: To complement and reinforce the recommendations already made throughout the BCTS review, the Province should explore new approaches to pricing fibre that better reflect the evolving realities of forest management in British Columbia. This includes incorporating stewardship incentives and other government objectives, more accurately pricing diverse types of fibre, and building flexibility to reflect local market conditions and fibre quality.

Recommendation 48: The Province should develop and implement a more strategic, coordinated approach to investing in the forests of tomorrow, prioritizing long term forest health, climate resilience, and economic opportunities while ensuring that efforts are aligned across ministries, agencies and partners. This approach should be informed by meaningful conversations with First Nations, local communities and industry, and should integrate local priorities into decision making.

Recommendation 49: The Province should enhance coordination across ministries, agencies and regulatory bodies to address complex initiatives that are currently restricting fibre access. New initiatives should be introduced and implemented in an approach that provides a transition period for industry and aligns forest sector needs with broader land management goals.

Recommendation 50: In order to address workforce shortages across the sector, the Province of British Columbia should collaborate with Forest Professionals BC to promote broader and more timely recognition of professional forestry accreditation from other Canadian provinces in an effort to facilitate labour mobility.

Recommendation 51: Given the need to grow domestic markets, the Ministry of Forests, in collaboration with broader government, should review and update British Columbia's "Wood First" policies to focus on expanding the use of mass timber and other value-added products in residential, commercial and industrial construction. This presents an opportunity to align forest sector goals with broader provincial objectives related to housing, economic development and climate resilience.

Recommendation 52: In collaboration with First Nations, implement a 10% volume recovery mechanism on replaceable tenures sold through the open market, with recovered volume reallocated to BCTS to enhance public timber marketing and ensure broader access to forest resources.

Recommendation 53: Clearly establish wildfire risk reduction as a long term, priority government objective in the wildland-urban interface areas to support ongoing prescription implementation for community protection.

Recommendation 54: Explore policies that prioritize the allocation and retention of fibre for local community use. This approach is essential to support the economic, social and environmental sustainability of rural and forest dependent communities across British Columbia.

