



January 15, 2024

Honourable Bruce Ralston
Minister of Forests and Minister
responsible for the Consular Corps
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Ralston:

Thank you for agreeing to serve as Minister of Forests and Minister responsible for the Consular Corps. I trust in your leadership at this critical time to deliver results for the people of British Columbia.

British Columbians continue to recover from and respond to the upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and climate related natural disasters, while global inflation is driving up costs for more households and the world's economic outlook is concerning. Now more than ever, we need to focus on building a secure, low emission, sustainable economy, and a province where everyone can find a good home – whether you live in a rural area, in a city, or in an Indigenous community. We will continue working toward true and meaningful reconciliation by supporting opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to be full partners in the inclusive and sustainable province we are building together.

Our government is committed to delivering on the mandate British Columbians gave us in 2020. Together we can make life better for people in B.C., improve the services we all rely on, and ensure a sustainable province for future generations.

As we renew our work, my priority as Premier is to deliver results that people can see and feel in four key areas:

- **Attainable and affordable housing:** In the wake of soaring prices and record migration to B.C., we will take on the important work of building new homes that are actually attainable for the middle class, while continuing our work to address the housing crisis for those in distress on our streets.

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- **Safer communities:** To address concerns about public safety, both for the people struggling with mental health and addiction on our streets, as well as the feeling that downtown centres are not as safe as they were before the pandemic, we will work with our partners at all levels of government, the justice and health care systems, the non-profit sector, and community leaders to find solutions for this complex challenge facing our province, and work overtime to seize the assets of high-level criminals.
- **Improved health care:** Amid unprecedented pressures we will continue to work to strengthen our public health care system, from family doctors to new hospitals, so care is there for each of us when we need it.
- **A sustainable, clean, secure, and fair economy:** We will continue our work investing in British Columbians, fighting racism and promoting equity, and building a clean economy that addresses our obligations to combat climate change by driving down emissions, while creating good, family supporting jobs.

Our forest sector has provided wealth and jobs for British Columbians for generations, but it has never been under greater stress. Loss of essential forests to mountain pine beetle, unprecedented forest fires, inadequate land use planning and replanting efforts by previous governments, unfair softwood lumber tariffs in the United States, and the unchecked export of raw logs, have resulted in the inescapable recognition across the province that change is needed to ensure our forest industry is sustainable.

Our government is working to deliver that change, through historic legislation to envision how government, forestry companies, forest workers, First Nations, and communities partner together to protect jobs and our forests. It is only by working together that we can ensure British Columbia can become a jurisdiction known internationally for the sustainability of our forestry industry. Innovative partnerships with First Nations, industry, and communities to maximize jobs, underlined by our commitment to forest policy modernization, transformational initiatives and meaningful land use plans that protect wild spaces, irreplaceable old growth and rare ecosystems are essential to delivering this vision.

The need to deliver a strong future for our forest industry, and ensure it sustainably supports generations into the future, must be a rallying call for all British Columbians. Our government must continue to play a leadership role in coordinating the partnerships needed to respond to these pressures. This effort will be a huge challenge, but one that British Columbia must take on, and one where we have already set a strong foundation for the work to come.

Since 2020, our government has made considerable progress on important initiatives including:

- Strengthen and improve forest policy through amendments to the Forest and Range Practices Act and the Forest Act, which are reshaping our forest management framework, supporting reconciliation with First Nations, and building a more diverse and inclusive forest sector.
- Making sure healthy forests are here for generations and reducing the effects of climate change by planting over half a billion trees in 2021 and 2022.
- Working toward a new fiscal relationship with First Nations by more than doubling forestry revenues shared with First Nations as part of the work to co- develop a new forestry revenue-sharing model.
- Working in partnership with First Nations to defer logging activity in areas of B.C.'s most at-risk old growth forests to help protect and support these ecosystems, while First Nations, the Province, and other partners develop a new approach to old growth forest management.
- Delivering co-ordinated and comprehensive supports for workers, communities and First Nations in the transition from high volume to high value forestry and deferrals of at-risk old growth forest including the convening of a new Forestry Worker Supports and Community Resiliency Council and through the Forest Employment Program.

As you continue to make progress on items in the previous mandate letter, over the remaining period of this mandate I expect you to prioritize making progress on the following:

- Improve timing and transparency of permitting processes to support sustainable economic development while maintaining high levels of environmental protection, aligned with cross-government work on permitting led by the Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship.

Continue work to strengthen and improve forest policy and legislation to ensure a competitive, sustainable future for communities, Indigenous Peoples, workers, and companies.

- Support the Minister of State for Sustainable Forestry Innovation to strengthen and improve the *Residual Fibre Utilization Policy* to increase fibre security and to address the urgent demand from secondary users and value-added manufacturers for sustainable cost-effective fibre supply.

- Accelerate the transition of our forestry sector from high-volume to high value production, with fewer raw log exports and more innovative wood products manufactured locally.
- Explore options for enhancing BC Timber Sales to support high value production, dedicating a specific portion of the annual allowable cut to producers creating new jobs for workers in BC, and supporting mills to transition to second and third growth trees.
- With support from the Minister of Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship, accelerate implementation of the recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review and actions to protect important old growth forests, and complete the old growth strategic action plan in 2023.
- Accelerate work to re-engineer cut block boundaries to maximize old growth protection and ensure supply of timber and fibre for manufacturing and value-added processing.
- Work with the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and the Minister of State for Sustainable Forestry Innovation to advance reconciliation and meet our government's obligations under DRIPA, continue to work toward full partnership with First Nations in managing B.C. forest resources, including through the new revenue sharing model being developed by our government.
- In collaboration with First Nations and with support from the Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, complete amendments to the Heritage Conservation Act in line with the DRIPA Action Plan.
- With support from the Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness, strengthen the BC Wildfire Services focus on wildfire prevention and management year-round, including cultural and prescribed fire.
- Explore options to improve training, retention, and recruitment in B.C. Wildfire Service.
- With support from the Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness, and in collaboration with local, federal and Indigenous governments, strengthen the province's flood response through the completion of B.C.'s Flood Strategy, and start the work to translate the strategy into action through the BC Flood Resilience Plan.

- With support from the Minister of State for Trade, continue work to protect and create jobs by fighting for a fair deal for B.C. wood products in softwood lumber negotiations with the United States.

To assist you in meeting the commitments we have made to British Columbians, you are assigned a Parliamentary Secretary for Value-Added Manufacturing. You will work closely together and ensure your Parliamentary Secretary receives appropriate support to deliver on the priorities outlined in the mandate letter issued to them.

Our work together must continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of people in this province. Issues not contemplated by this letter will come forward for government action and I ask you to bring such matters forward for consideration by the Planning and Priorities Committee of Cabinet, with the expectation that any proposed initiatives will be subject to the usual Cabinet and Treasury Board oversight and include measurable outcomes for British Columbians. Your ministry's priorities must reflect our government's overall strategic plan as determined by Cabinet.

British Columbians expect their elected representatives to work together to advance the public good. That means seeking out, fostering, and championing good ideas regardless of their origin. I expect you to reach out to elected members from all parties as you deliver on your mandate. Further, you will build thoughtful and sustained relationships both with title holders and through public and stakeholder engagement plans that incorporate diverse perspectives early in the policy development process. Federal partnerships and resources will be particularly important and, on behalf of our government, you will engage with the federal government on advancing priorities to improve the lives of British Columbians.

As a Cabinet, we will uphold the highest standards of ethics, collaboration, and good conduct in service of the public, and as a Minister of the Crown, you are expected to review, understand, and act according to the Members' Conflict of Interest Act. You will establish a collaborative working relationship with your Deputy Minister, and the public servants under their direction, who provide the professional, non-partisan advice that is fundamental to delivering on our government's priorities. Your Minister's Office must meet the highest standards for integrity and provide a respectful, rewarding environment for all staff.

The rural and urban challenges that we face are urgent and complex. In response, we must be forward-thinking, strategic, and ready to work across disciplines and old divisions in new ways. Labour shortages are a major issue globally, and British Columbia is no exception, including in the public service. Maintaining the BC Public Service as an employer of excellence will be key to retaining and recruiting the diverse professionals we rely on to deliver essential services, advice, and analysis.

At the core of this work is listening and responding to the priorities of people in B.C. Together, we can deliver results in very real ways – ways that people can see, feel, and touch, and that change their lives for the better. Thank you for doing this important work with me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Eby", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Eby, KC
Premier