



January 15, 2024

Honourable Andrew Mercier
Minister of State for Sustainable Forestry Innovation
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Mercier:

Thank you for agreeing to serve as Minister of State for Sustainable Forestry Innovation. 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.

Building a strong, secure, and forest sector that works for everyone means the province has an obligation to consider the socio-economic interests of all citizens of B.C and must continue to make decisions that seek a balance of all interests including First Nations, local governments, and industry partners.

Access to fibre is one of the most critical challenges facing the forestry industry. Forestry workers and communities throughout the province are benefiting from the efforts of the Forest Enhancement Society of BC to increase fibre supply aimed at keeping people working and local mills running, while also mitigating wildfire risks and reducing climate emissions. This supports our CleanBC Roadmap to 2030 and our continued focus on getting more well-paying jobs from our forests.

Since 2022, our government has made considerable progress on important initiatives including:

- Increasing First Nations and community participation in the forest sector including increasing diversity who has access to tenure and who manufactures forest products.
- Ensuring growth of good jobs and long-term opportunities while transitioning from high-volume to high-value and ensuring all communities benefit from local forests as well as encouraging diversification in higher value manufacturing.
- Investing in Forest Enhancement Society of BC and introducing Wildfire Salvage Opportunities Agreement to support residual fibre users and fibre industry diversification.

Over the remaining period of this mandate I expect you to prioritize making progress on the following:

- Support local and regional business to business relationships between primary harvesters, secondary users, value-added manufacturers, and First Nations to access residual fibre through negotiated fibre supply agreements.

With support from the Minister of Forests, 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.

- Work with the Minister of Forests and Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation to expediate work with First Nations to implement processes, including constructive arrangements and government-to-government agreements like Wildfire Salvage Opportunities Agreements and Forest Consultation and Revenue Sharing Agreements.
- Work to address apportionment by improving processes and policies so that apportionment decisions in management units, where timber supply is declining, can be made in a timely manner that strengthens the secondary and value-added manufacturing sectors.
- Facilitate the growth of B.C.'s bioeconomy through key partnerships that advance new and innovative forest product facilities such as engineered wood, supporting forest revitalization, and the CleanBC plan.
- Support 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.

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

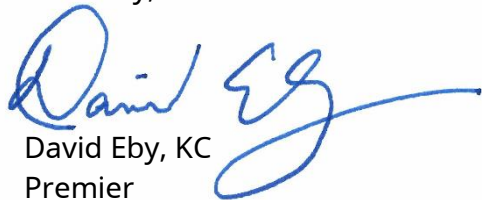
diverse perspectives early in the policy development process. Federal partnerships and resources will be particularly important and, on behalf of our government, you will engage with the federal government on advancing priorities to improve the lives of British Columbians.

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,



David Eby, KC
Premier