

Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Response to the Ministry of Forests Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development's Discussion Paper:

Forest and Range Practices Act Improvement Initiative: Renewal and Resilience

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

UBCM welcomes the opportunity to provide its comments on the Province's Discussion Paper, *Forest and Range Practices Act* Improvement Initiative: *Renewal and Resilience*.

UBCM, through the work of its Community Economic Development Committee has been very proactive in promoting engagement and consultation with local governments in forest policy decision-making. It began with a member survey in 2015¹ when 85% of our members shared experiences of inadequate community consultation/engagement by both major tenure holders and the provincial government regarding forestry decisions. Over 2016² and 2017³, the Committee continued to actively promote the importance of local government engagement to the forest industry, provincial staff, professional forest associations and other forest-related organizations. Recognizing that local governments have key roles and responsibilities with respect to the land base, it is imperative that their voice be represented at these decision-making tables.

UBCM's advocacy efforts around forest policy and more broadly land use decision making have been advanced through the appointment of UBCM Second Vice President, Councillor Brian Frenkel to the Minister's Advisory Council on Forests and Range Practices (PAC) and to the Private Managed Forest Land Council. Both of these appointments have facilitated a local government presence at these important policy development tables.

¹https://www.ubcm.ca/assets/Resolutions~and~Policy/Policy/Community~Economic~Development/Forest_Policy_Decision-making.pdf

²https://www.ubcm.ca/assets/Resolutions~and~Policy/Policy/Community~Economic~Development/Forest_Policy_Decision_Making-Round_Table_Discussion_Summary-2016-11.pdf

³<https://www.ubcm.ca/assets/Resolutions~and~Policy/Policy/Community~Economic~Development/2017%20UBCM%20Forestry%20Workshop%20Discussion%20Summary%20FINAL.pdf>

In addition to the survey work, discussion papers and summary documents over the past three years, UBCM members have continued to express their policy positions on a variety of forest policy matters through UBCM's resolutions process.

The resolutions appended to this submission reflect the topics covered in the Ministry's discussion paper – climate change; landscape-level planning; public trust; resource objectives and values; and oversight and accountability. There are also a number of other forest policy issues adopted by our membership that may be considered outside the scope of the Province's discussion paper, but these have been included as well in the "other" category appended to this submission. These resolutions reflect topics such as community forests, old growth, enhancing value added manufacturing opportunities, log exports, softwood lumber agreement, etc.

UBCM would encourage the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development to avail themselves of the UBCM's on line, searchable resolutions data base⁴ where additional UBCM policy positions can be located.

Instead of providing lengthy responses to the questions posed we have chosen to provide brief summary comments, in italics, which allude to the relevant topics in the appended package of resolutions. In some cases the resolutions may respond to more than one question or category of questions but we assume the submission will be reviewed in its entirety.

2. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS POSED

Climate Change and Resilient Landscapes

How should the Province identify opportunities and priorities for adapting forest management to a changing climate, such as mitigating the effects of beetle infestations, drought and fire?

What factors should be considered in the planning of forest operations to reduce the risks of wildfire around your community?

UBCM Response

UBCM members have adopted a number of resolutions pertaining to impacts of climate change (i.e. beetle infested wood, wildfires, floods) and have brought forward recommendations for action within those resolutions.

⁴ <https://www.ubcm.ca/resolutions/default.aspx>

Landscape-Level Planning

A vital step in landscape-level planning is understanding what is important to the public. Based on what is important to you or your community, what information on the condition of resource values (such as species-at-risk habitat) do you think is necessary to support the planning process?

How would you like to be involved in the planning process?

Resource roads are a valuable asset in the province as they provide access for the forest industry, ranchers, other resource users, and the public for commercial and recreation purposes. Yet, these same road networks are costly to maintain and have potential negative impacts on wildlife, water quality and fish habitat. What values do you believe are important to consider when planning new roads, road use and maintenance, and deactivation in your area?

UBCM Response

UBCM members have consistently sought a greater role in forest policy decision-making as referenced in our survey in 2015, and further reports in 2016 and 2017 as noted earlier. BC communities have asked that the tenure holders provide more detailed information about forest activities within their regions so it is more clearly understood what the potential impacts will be and what mitigative measure may be required to avoid sensitive areas such as community watersheds. Recognizing that the back country is used to recreate more and more, UBCM members have adopted policy related to resource roads, their maintenance as well as their importance to tourism as a key local economic drivers for communities.

Public Trust

How can the Province improve transparency and timelines of information regarding proposed operational and landscape-level objectives, plans and results?

What information will help inform your feedback on plans that may impact you, your community or your business (e.g., maps of cut blocks and roads planned in your area, hydrological assessments, wildlife habitat areas or recreation opportunities, etc.)?

UBCM Response

UBCM members have asked for greater consultation and engagement with respect to forest policy decision-making. Local governments have asked for greater detailed information about what is going to happen in specific cut blocks

so they can have a better understanding of what the potential impacts might be. Without this engagement and consultation, communities are often dealing with unintended consequences such as contaminated watersheds. Local governments have information that can assist in ensuring that negative impacts can be avoided.

There is not a specific package of resolutions on this topic but the issue is reflected in many of the other resolutions and within our survey work and other summary reports.

Resource Values and Objectives

What additional values should be considered in FRPA that will allow us to manage forest and range practices in a better way?

UBCM Response:

UBCM members have noted wildland – urban interface issues referencing the need to reduce the wildfire hazard and sound science research to protect the economic, environmental and social assets of community interface forests; the importance of value added industries to diversify local economies and socio-economic impacts associated with species at risk legislation (i.e. caribou recovery plan). UBCM members have also asked that any provincial land use planning processes be inclusive, ensuring that all interested parties; aboriginal communities, local governments, industry and others have an opportunity to be part of the consultation and engagement process prior to any decisions being made about land use designations or changes to those designations.

Oversight and Accountability

In what ways should the Province strengthen government oversight and industry accountability regarding forest and range activities to better address the challenges of climate change and the interests of all British Columbians?

UBCM Response:

UBCM members have sought a greater enforcement role by the Province to protect crown land from illegal dumping; ensuring that industry and others operating on crown land are fulfilling their regulatory obligations; and that streams, and other natural resources are not negatively impacted by resource extraction.

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

UBCM thanks the Province for undertaking this consultation and we welcome the opportunity to share the policy positions and perspectives of our membership – which includes all BC local governments and eight First Nation members.

UBCM members have adopted extensive policy on a variety of forest-related matters. This submission is designed to provide an overview of those policy positions as it relates to the questions posed within the discussion paper. UBCM would encourage the Province to access our on line resolutions database to explore further resolutions from our members as this submission is not inclusive of all motions adopted related to forest policy.

Thank you once again for providing us with this opportunity to share the policy positions and perspectives of our collective membership. We hope that the information provided by UBCM and our respective members will assist the Province and inform its review of BC’s forest policy framework.

Attachments:

UBCM Resolutions