

To: Old Growth Strategic Review panel

RE: Developing an updated approach to old-growth management for BC

I am writing to you as both a former professional forester for a major timber harvesting company in BC, and as a former director of a principle BC west coast environmental group.

I believe my two hats, as they say, give me a unique perspective to offer some input to this review panel.

From December 1974 to December 1975 I was principle forester designing the existing and proposed logging roads within a large section of Clayoquite Sound; the outer temperate coastal rainforests of BC.

During that year I was absolutely astounded by two things: 1) The incredible size, density and biodiversity of those very old growth forests, and 2) The utter disregard for the same, as well as the complete desecration of all creeks and rivers and estuaries connected to these dense forest lands.

As a forester I tried to moderate our companies forest practices to take a more respectable approach to harvesting; I was ignored.

I therefore quit the logging company and used all my knowledge as a first-hand witness to said practices and applied these to forming an environmental group in 1979, which continues to be active today. Through the 1980's we join forces with the local First Nations tribes to protect vast hectares Clayoquot forests for blended purposes. By the 1990's, as logging companies continued to request more and more access to the entire west coast, I, as director of the environmental group at the time, met numerous times with BC Minister of Forest reps, logging company reps, associated science panels; all around the same table. And

this is what I had to say to them all then, and this is what I have to say to the review panel now:

- 1) The west coastal temperate rainforests along much of the British Columbia coastline are the last remnants of nearly contiguous rainforest of this type in the entire world, and always have been. Only a fraction of this kind of forest has ever existed in thousands of years; perhaps 2 1/2 percent of the planets existing forest - say about 200 years ago. BC's temperate rainforests were a very large portion of that original tally; it is not a logging pie to be divided, it is a world heritage remnant sliver of the planets most biodiverse living mass in existence. (It's not just a bunch of old trees— it is a hugely complex diversity of life) Although on the large tree front— let me tell you first hand my forestry crew measured healthy, still growing, red-cedar trees up to 24 feet in diameter, and where the trees were being cut I counted grow rings reaching 1,800 years in age— There were never and destructive forest fires in at least 2-thousand years... thus creating a most incredible slice of nature ever witnessed.
- 2) Therefore, BC's 'old-growth' forests are to be completely protected by all means possible and in extension, honoured as one of our most proud heritages; the best living example of what life is supposed to be - our last template to compare our future harvesting practices to—
- 3) Log the second, third forth generation forest lands, leave the old ones alone.

Thanks for having this discussion,

Leigh Hilbert,

Salt Spring Island, BC

January 31st, at 3:45pm