

28 January, 2020

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**Submission to the Old Growth Strategic Review Panel**

**Garry Merkel**

**Al Gorley**

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Good day,

As a survivor of the engagement process around South Moresby land base use in the 1970's and 1980's, it is with all the stoicism I can muster to once again enter the fray. I must profess my skepticism in the engagement process; in the case of South Moresby the process garnered scientific panel reports, advisory committee recommendations, letters to the Premier, petitions, newspaper editorials and talk show transcripts – all of which was of little effect against eventual political decision-making and execution.

What spurs me to engage is the pride I take in my involvement in the coastal BC forest industry, going on strong after 44 years. I have been employed by Western Forest Products (and its predecessor companies) since 1976.

Companies are legal constructs; it is the people within the company that make the difference. My pride stems from Western's people, and also its history which can be traced back to Mill Bay sawmill operations in the 1870's, and which includes a legacy company leader who was also the Province's first Chief Forester, the pioneering entrepreneurialism that resulted in the construction of several isolated pulp mills and spurred the regional growth of the coast, to today where as a BC headquartered company we are meeting the needs of customers worldwide, chiefly sourced from Vancouver Island communities from north to south, and from east to west.

My employer takes its commitment to the stewardship of crown resources as a written core value, and this has been a hallmark of the company for my entire 44-year career and well before; this is no different from the culture I walked into as I began my career. The introduction of Tree Farm Licenses in the 1940's and 1950's spurred the establishment and stabilization of west coast communities; company employees were the initial municipal councils in some of these towns. These people were my role models as a youngster growing up on Northern Vancouver Island.

There are few companies in British Columbia that have the rich history, community engagement commitment and economic resiliency that Western has accumulated over 150 years of business. There may be pros and cons to the forest tenure system in BC, but I am convinced that the highest level of standards is maintained by those who are not only managing the public resource for the future, but also the economic future of their employer. This enhanced stewardship is one of many ways the public gains in the system. The popular rhetoric that speaks to companies getting a free ride on public land, and making Timber Baron-sized fortunes, is diametrically opposite to the reality of the hard work,

competitive drive, and adaptability required to be economically successful on the Coast, and completely ignores the fact that Western and its legacy companies, as crown tenure holders, have directly contributed hundreds of millions of dollars to the provincial treasury over the years.

Given the long continuum of forestry operations in coastal British Columbia, any notion of jamming the gears of annual allowable cut is exceedingly hard to consider. Tenure holders, in all good faith, have built business models and allocated capital investment dollars on the premise of a well managed, sustainable business - grounded in a land ethic and care for the environment including maintaining old forests.

The TFL-based tenure system has been in place for over 70 years; it is no longer experimental! Businesses (big and small), lives and communities in coastal BC have been experiencing turmoil from several fronts in recent times, but a move to restrict access to the Working part of the Forest would have a devastating long-term impact on all. You will have the duty (and hopefully privilege) of hearing directly from hundreds of people who are extremely worried about this potential broadside to their futures. You will directly hear evidence that an enforced rather than structured transition from old growth to second growth will lead to an extreme imbalance of forest age classes with a resulting drastic reduction to coastal AAC. I am pleased to review your panel biographies and note the breadth of your knowledge and experience. I appreciate the magnitude of your task and know that the ring of truth will be heard by you.

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S.M. Farrell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

S.M. Farrell

Campbell River, BC