August 15, 2019

Ravi Kahlon, MLA
Parliamentary Secretary for Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
East Annex, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Parliamentary Secretary Kahlon,

Congratulations on your new appointment as Parliamentary Secretary for Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development.

As you know, in April 2019 the British Columbia government launched a regionally driven renewal of the province’s Interior forest industry, aimed at developing a competitive, sustainable future for forest companies, workers and communities.

The Interior forest industry faces unique challenges. Government and industry have known for many years that the end of Mountain Pine Beetle harvests would create significant challenges for Interior forest-dependent communities. These challenges have been exacerbated as the Interior fibre supply declines, access to low-cost timber decreases, lumber prices decline and the competition for available fibre increases. This, combined with two consecutive catastrophic wildfire seasons and an oversupply in manufacturing capacity, has placed real pressure on forest workers and their communities.

Despite these challenges, the forest sector remains a cornerstone of our economy. The sector continues to show leadership on reconciliation and environmental sustainability. I’m confident in our ability to transform the industry to meet today’s challenges by working together with communities, forest companies, and First Nations. That is what the renewal process launched this April is all about – it is a collaboration with industry and key stakeholders aimed at addressing long-standing challenges and facilitating a forest sector transformation that allows workers and communities extract greater value from our forest resources.

These challenges are significant and will require increased focus from government. To that end, I want to ensure that the Hon. Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource...
Operations and Rural Development, will be able to focus his efforts on the significant policy issues that we must address in the short and medium terms. These include Interior forest policy renewal, the Coast forest sector revitalization initiative, the southern mountain caribou recovery plan, the old growth strategy and the ongoing U.S. softwood lumber dispute. Additionally, the Minister will have to serve as the statutory decision maker on future tenure transfers, and as a result, must ensure that he is able to make impartial decisions in the public interest.

To that end, I would like you to assist Minister Donaldson in engaging with industry, First Nations, labour, and community leaders and gathering input and advice on short and medium-term solutions. I would also like you to monitor the collaborative planning process envisaged in the local TSA tables as they begin to form and help government support local communities and First Nations in developing an inclusive, viable and implementable vision for industry competitiveness and community economic stability. Finally, I would like you to help ensure that government’s workers and community assistance programs are delivered in a targeted and coordinated way. I expect you to work in conjunction with Deputy Minister John Allan, and Fairness Advisor Larry Pedersen on these important issues.

We have an opportunity to build the forestry future we all want: a competitive industry with opportunities for local workers, real partnerships for First Nations, and security for forest-dependent communities. I look forward to working with you in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

John Horgan
Premier

cc: Honourable Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development