

Future Forest Ecosystems of BC
Exploring the Opportunities

Jim Snetsinger, Chief Forester
Opening Remarks
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UNBC

Check against delivery

- Good morning everyone.
- Welcome to Prince George and the beautiful campus of UNBC.
- Before I say a few words about the symposium and what I am hoping to accomplish, I would like to say a few thank you's and provide some well deserved recognition...
- I'd like to acknowledge the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, since we are on their traditional territory. I'm sorry Chief Dominic Frederic wasn't able to be here to welcome us.
- I'd like to begin by thanking everyone for coming today. The province's forest resources are something we all cherish. I think this is evidenced by the tremendous response, and breadth of participation we have had to this symposium.
- I would also like to formally take this opportunity to thank UNBC, and specifically the President Charles Yago and the Vice President of Research, Max Blouw. Both of these leaders say the benefit of allowing the Chief Forester to have an office at UNBC is worthwhile and a move which I believe is paying dividends to both the Ministry of Forests and Range and the University of Northern British Columbia.

- I would also like to thank UNBC for agreeing to host this event during the busy Christmas exam period. I know this put extra strain on the system but you have once again gone the extra mile to provide us with a beautiful venue as we discuss issues that will help us collectively shape our future forests.
- Next I would like to thank the steering committee that assisted me in organizing this symposium. The members of the Steering Committee were:
 - o Sally Aitken, Professor of Population genetics, UBC
 - o Staffan Lindgren, Entomology Professor, UNBC
 - o Walter Matosevic, Forestry Manager, Business Improvement, Canfor
 - o Randy Trierise, Woodlands Manager of Pope and Talbot, and President of the ABCFP
 - o Tom Maness, Forest Professor, UBC and Director of the BC Forum
- All these folks are extremely busy with their careers so I really appreciate the time they donated to assist with developing the agenda, identifying the speakers and designing the format for the symposium.
- I would also like to say a huge thank you to Rick Ellis who has provided all the coordination assistance with the symposium. And everyone knows how much work goes on behind the scenes, however, Rick handled this with skill and precision.
- And lastly I would like to thank Al Gorley for agreeing to chair our session over the next two days. Al has been a leader on the forest management scene in British Columbia for the past 30 years.

- Not only will he be keeping us on task and on time, he will also be summarizing the recommendations from the working groups tomorrow and he will be assisting us in preparing the final symposium report once the report from the working group leaders has been submitted.
- Okay, let's get down to business.
- Why are we having this symposium and what do we hope to accomplish?
- Let's address the purpose of the symposium first.
- I have been the Chief Forester of the province for a little over a year. During that time many people have asked me "Where are you taking forest management in British Columbia?"; "Jim, what is your vision for forest management in BC?" And my boss, the Deputy Minister, Doug Konkin, has been asking me if we are prepared for the future given all the factors influencing our forests.
- As a result of these types of questions and other prodding, I decided the only way to really shape some strategic direction was to start to have some dialogue with those that are the most knowledgeable and experienced in the various aspects of forest management.
- As you all know, our forests are facing significant change in light of factors such as climate change, fire, drought conditions in the south, increased outbreak of forest insects such as mountain pine beetle and forest diseases such as dothistroma.

- Are we prepared for these changes? If not, what do we have to do to ensure that through our management we are designing future forests in a manner that they will be sustainable, and provide the numerous benefits to the generations that come after us.
- There are other activities underway that are focused on specific issues – like the mountain pine beetle. This symposium is designed to complement those activities by taking a broader look at a range of change agents and responses, and a longer timeframe look at things.
- I am sure everyone attending this event has looked at the agenda and said “Doesn’t he know that there are many other factors affecting forest management in British Columbia?” Factors such as community values, First Nations interests, water, environmental factors such as habitat requirements for our fish and wildlife species. And doesn’t he know that there are numerous economic factors that affect forest management such as utilization levels, stumpage rates, tenure security, access to markets, and a host of others?
- Yes, I do understand that those factors also significantly affect forest management in British Columbia. However, what I decided to focus on was the ecological factors that influence our forest practices. There are other venues that are addressing these other components of forest management such as the BC Forum so I will have to rely on those initiatives to provide input on the other factors.
- It would be great if this symposium also stimulated similar interest and discussion on the other values that don’t currently have a “venue” in place.

- So what is the context within which this symposium fits for the Chief Forester? My vision for forest management in B.C. is that:

“British Columbia is widely respected as a leader in the management of natural forest and range landscapes to maintain diverse values and provide an array of products that are valued in the marketplace.”

- The purpose of the Chief Forester’s vision is to guide policy development in the forest sector for the foreseeable future. It flows from, and is consistent with, the government’s goal to “lead the world in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and water quality, and the best fisheries management,” and the MOFR mission to “protect, manage, and conserve forest and range values.” It speaks to the diverse values and interests that provincial forests hold for British Columbians.
- The purpose of this symposium is to review the ecological and management change agents impacting the forests in BC. To evaluate the current management paradigm to determine how we can prepare to manage our forests into the future.
- I personally believe over the past forty years in British Columbia we have been able to build a very solid foundation for our forest management framework.
- This foundation consists of a host of components including a comprehensive scientific ecological understanding of our forests in the form of our biogeoclimatic ecosystem classification system, our comprehensive land use plans, a comprehensive set of legislation and regulations to guide forest practices, and many years of forest professionals practicing forestry in British Columbia.

- While I recognize, and appreciate, the solid forest management foundation that we have developed, I don't think we can afford to look in the rearview mirror when we have so many factors that are changing our forest ecosystems and that will consequently affect the outcome of our forest management efforts.
- And while I don't think we can afford to spend much time reviewing the past, I don't think I should disregard the foundation that we have developed. Rather, I think we need to build from that solid foundation and use it as a springboard to help shape our future actions and strategies.
- I think that the challenges we are facing from the factors I mentioned earlier, and others that our speakers will describe, will be formidable and interesting. I believe that we are much more likely to respond effectively to these changes if we develop a deeper collaborative approach to evaluating what is likely to change and then, together, determining how forest management in B.C. can be shaped to be successful in achieving our goals.
- So, what happens after this symposium?
- Well, its tough to make a paradigm shift without a clutch, and our clutch will be a process of reporting and then moving recommendations into the policy and committee review and consultation processes
- I envision that we will have produced a summary of key messages and opportunities from the symposium by Thursday of this week.

- Our next job will be to meet with the working group leaders of tomorrow's discussion groups and to review the recommendations and develop an overall report.
- We expect to have all the symposium presentations posted on the web by mid December. Then we'll be preparing a symposium report and posting that on the web by the end of January.
- Our next task will be to develop a work plan that outlines how we are going to take action on the recommendations for the symposium. It is our intent to post this work plan on the web as well.
- As we have all come to realize, forest management is complex. The discussions we will have over the next couple of days will be part of the continuing dialogue that is required to effectively manage our precious forest resources.
- I want to thank all our speakers in advance for leading our discussions today and I also want to once again thank everyone for coming and participating in this symposium. I look forward to some interesting discussions and to the recommendations that the working groups will develop tomorrow.