



**Principles and Opportunities
for Strengthening Community Interactions In Forestry
Workshop Discussion Summary
2017 UBCM Convention**

Prepared in partnership between

Union of BC Municipalities

and

**Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and
Rural Development**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) and the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (“the Ministry”) have undertaken a working partnership to explore opportunities to strengthen local government’s engagement in forestry activities within and around BC communities. Specifically, members of UBCM’s Community Economic Development (CED) Committee have worked closely with the Ministry’s Stewardship Division to initiate a more positive working relationship between industry, the Province and communities. Over the past two years, we have focused on working together to find solutions that specifically highlight where communities can actively influence forest policy decision-making.

This cross-Government partnership resulted from three key actions.

Action 1 In 2015 the UBCM appointed the Vice-Chair of its Community Economic Development Committee as its Forestry Representative and official member of the Minister’s Forests and Range Practices Act Advisory Committee (PAC).

Action 2 UBCM’s Community Economic Development (CED) Committee conducted a forestry survey in December 2015 to seek current data about communication between forest tenure holders and local governments, and the impact of forestry decisions on communities

Action 3 In 2016, there was a half day UBCM session entitled “Forest Policy Decision-Making: The Case for Greater Community Consultation and Engagement”. Through presentations and roundtable discussion, five recommendations emerged from the 2016 Session after participants were asked the following question: What steps/actions can (communities / industry / Province) take to improve consultation and engagement opportunities with respect to forest policy decision-making? The five recommendations were:

1. Support for the Establishment of Communication Protocols/Local Forest Advisory Committees
2. Develop a long-term provincial forest strategy
3. Restructure existing provincial bodies to include community/local government representation
4. Mandate sustainable forest management certification
5. Increase Enforcement and Monitoring Efforts

Fall 2017 To continue the conversation, there was a workshop at the 2017 UBCM conference entitled “Forestry 101: Principles and Opportunities for Strengthening Community Interactions”. Hosted by the Ministry, chaired by UBCM, session participants were asked to discuss two questions:

- What has changed in the past year that is working well? What practices have you seen or been part of?
- What do communities need in order to be confident and informed about activities on the surrounding land base?

Six major themes emerged from the 2017 discussion.

Theme 1 Information Sharing and Community Engagement

Outreach, communication and meaningful engagement remain the biggest challenges to collaboration.

Theme 2 Communication

Communication broke down into four component parts. First, achieving appropriate kinds of education for non-foresters; Communities want information and transparency tailored to their needs. Second, improving points of contact; communities often do not know who to go to, or how Government and industry is organized. Third, operational information; while Forest Stewardship Plans (FSPs) are a key planning tool, they are often unclear and too technical. And fourthly, timing of communication; ongoing information sharing on forest management would be more appreciated than waiting until an issue forces discussion.

Theme 3 Tenure Arrangements

Some communities noted that new forest tenure opportunities that have been awarded in their area have led to improved timber utilization along with greater participation by First Nations in local forest industry.

Theme 4 Water

Hydrology is a priority, particularly in the context of climate change. Water protection requires broad attention to multiple activities including harvesting, road building and maintenance, cattle grazing, and providing a safe, secure water supply to communities.

Theme 5 Land Use Planning and Consultation

Communities want reassurance that the land is being managed after harvesting, that roads are stable, and that the land is re-generating.

Theme 6 Wildfire

For many southern interior communities, addressing the immediate and long-term impacts from wildfires was a priority. Communities expressed an appreciation for the increased level of collaboration around Wildland Urban Interface fuel management plans, wildfire response planning, and updating community fire plans. Salvage identified both the need for quick action considering the enormity of the situation, but also caution against moving too quickly without planning.

Overall, participants felt that communication between industry and communities has improved since the previous UBCM discussion in 2016, but they stressed that “big picture” conversations need to continue to happen, and that FLNRORD needs to help build an inclusive forum for these conversations.

Roundtable discussions confirmed real-world improvements since 2016, which are being shared through this report in order to support their use elsewhere. And while progress has been made, it is our hope that through the continued Ministry-UBCM partnership there will be more best practices to share.

Background

Starting fall 2015, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) and the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (“the Ministry”) undertook a working partnership to explore opportunities to strengthen local government’s engagement in forestry activities within and around BC communities.

This cross-Government partnership resulted in three UBCM key actions.

1. In 2015 the UBCM’s Community Economic Development Committee, Vice-Chair was officially made a member of the Minister’s Forests and Range Practices Act Advisory Committee (PAC).
2. UBCM’s Community Economic Development (CED) Committee conducted a forestry survey in December 2015 to seek current data about communication and consultation practices between forest tenure holders and local governments, and the impact of forestry decisions upon communities. These survey results were compiled into a report entitled *Forest Policy Decision Making: The Case for Greater Communication and Consultation* that was released in March 2016.
3. In 2016, there was a UBCM Pre-conference Session entitled “Forest Policy Decision-Making: The Case for Greater Community Consultation and Engagement”. The session assisted in identifying opportunities to strengthen community engagement in forestry. Through round table discussions, five recommendations came forward specifically identifying actions to be taken by the Province, industry and communities:
 1. Support for the Establishment of Communication Protocols/Local Forest Advisory Committees
 2. Develop a long-term provincial forest strategy
 3. Restructure existing provincial bodies to include community/local government representation
 4. Mandate sustainable forest management certification
 5. Increase Enforcement and Monitoring Efforts

To continue the conversation, there was a UBCM session at the 2017 conference entitled “Forestry 101: Principles and Opportunities for Strengthening Community Interactions”. This session was coordinated by Ministry staff and was intended to take the 2016 conversation a step further. The session was designed to draw out the examples of positive engagement in order to share them with other areas of the province, and to identify further areas of improvement.

This report documents the results of the 2017 UBCM session on improving community engagement in forestry. This document further informs the work of the CED Committee and provides input to the Ministry, along with the Minister’s Forest and Range Practices Act’s Practices Advisory Board (PAC).

2017 UBCM Session Overview

The Forestry 101: Principles and Opportunities for Strengthening Community Interactions session was held on Thursday September 28th, 2017 at the UBCM Convention in Vancouver. The session was attended by approximately 100 participants comprising five local government associations. The half-day session included brief panel presentations from the provincial government and industry. The

majority of the session was dedicated to small group round table discussions. Participants were asked to sit at designated tables; based on geographic area (Area Associations) to ensure that communities were matched up with the corresponding tenure holders (industry, forestry associations) and provincial officials from their region. Session participants were asked to discuss two questions:

1. *What has changed in the past year that is working well? What practices have you seen or been part of?*
2. *What do communities need in order to be confident and informed about activities on the surrounding land base?*

Designated note takers were assigned to each table. From those notes the following summary has been created. Participants broadly expressed a desire to see communities continue to be successful alongside forestry, and six major themes emerged from the table discussions.

KEY THEMES

Theme 1. Information Sharing and Community Engagement

Participants agreed that they see forest management, in its broadest sense, as a complex mosaic of interests and values and that there is a need for better communication among the Province, local governments and forest licensees. The public is becoming better educated, aware, and willing to be involved. Without effective communication and engagement finding a balance between competing interests that meets public scrutiny becomes more difficult. While many positive examples of collaboration were provided, including the development of MoUs to formalize more forest industry outreach, communication and meaningful engagement remain the biggest challenges to collaboration.

Many local governments expressed a need for more meaningful engagement, and while they accept that communities have to be proactive with input regarding their own interests, the process for input can be confusing – i.e., how to provide, and to whom? For example, there is a legal requirement of licensees (including BCTS) to advertise forest stewardship plans (FSPs) in the local newspapers. However, the decline of local newspapers has created an uncertainty for reliable notification of forestry activities and opportunities to request information. The similar requirements for advertising timber sales licenses has raised concerns about the need for effective communication and access to dedicated ministry staff to address significant forestry issues including land use, logging adjacent to lakes, homes etc. Some local governments have experienced the downsizing or movement of local Ministry offices resulting in a reduction of appropriate staff being available to address questions and issues. In some cases the nearest office is now a two or three hour drive away.

Some local governments felt that engagement happened when all the decisions had already been made, and that government or companies were sharing information only to meet regulatory requirements. For example, working closely on issues like proposed deer culls and wildfire mitigation have allowed communities to contribute to plans that represent multiple interests, but implementation of the plans becomes mired in legislation or other roadblocks. Engagement needs to be kept within

the context of what can be implemented, which requires strong leadership by those leading the process.

Examples of Real-World Improvements in Information Sharing and Engagement

- Tolko provides District-wide maps for areas in the southern interior (Kamloops Timber Supply Area), primarily with information that includes the location of cutblocks and roads. The company also sends maps directly to ranchers, and organizes annual meetings between licensees and range operators. Industry wants to provide certainty to landowners as to what is proposed on the land base, recognizing that government has already decided how much harvest (Allowable Annual Cut) is available and what land use planning regimes are in place to guide development.
- The Ministry's Chief Forester Leadership Team has instituted 'breakfast meetings' to work with communities. One local government representative shared that they had attended an Operational Issues Forum breakfast meeting and would have liked there to be more substance with regard to discussions of issues/concerns.
- The community of Roberts Creek has become very engaged, encouraging better communication from BCTS and Community Forest managers. Their primary concern is that discussions are often regarding specific sites rather than a holistic landscape discussion. However, there is a knowledge and capacity issue in dealing with controversial forestry issues where community forums can be difficult and non-productive. The community is seeking knowledgeable facilitation to find balance between economic development and community concerns.
- In the Cowichan Valley the forest industry has been proactive in reaching out and providing forestry/watershed tours. The Chief Foresters group reached out to the Regional District, and this has helped the public understand how forestry works and to resolve many misunderstandings before they become major issues.
- The Managed Forest Council (private forestry lands) has been meeting with communities to share information about the private land regulatory model, and to increase understanding and knowledge in relevant communities.
- Proactive communities have set up meetings with their council and all the companies in their area to discuss forestry issues. Fort St. James is one such example whereby this approach was used to resolve concerns about the safety of public users on a road that was seeing increased industrial use due to a change in hauling patterns. Concerns regarding activities in watersheds or near water intakes are other examples where communities can take a lead in the discussions. An example is the Regional District of Nanaimo working with industry partners to create a forestry education day for its board and others. The Sunshine Coast Regional District is planning similar regional Forestry workshops.

Theme 2. Communication.

Communities want information and transparency, but not just any information – it has to be tailored to their needs. Communication emerged as a key theme, with four components:

1. Appropriate Education
2. Improved Points of Contact

3. Improved Operational Communication
4. Improved Timing of Communication.

Appropriate Education

Several local governments expressed a need for government and the industry to do more in educating communities on forestry issues such as old growth and the importance of forestry in providing good, community-sustaining jobs. Social media contributes to a polarization of communication on 'hot button' issues, and local governments need a countering influence to educate community members on the economic dependence these communities have on forestry.

For example, the decision making processes and procedures related to forestry on Crown land are not always clear to local governments or the public. Local government and community members require more information and education regarding government approval processes, such as the FSP, cutting permits, etc.

Improved Points of Contact

Elected officials serving in smaller communities do not usually do so on a full time basis. Most have full time employment outside of local government and volunteer with other community organizations in addition to serving their community. Their ability to find information by scanning multiple websites or visiting company and government offices is limited. Not only does the information need to be understandable and relevant, it needs to be a consistent, available point of communication. For example, a single website that carries all the harvesting and road building by all licensees, which is a level of coordination not currently seen. It can be especially frustrating when a region is a 'fibre basket' for the industry, but there are no local District and industry offices, reducing local points of contact. Given the reduction in District offices, is there a role for Front Counter BC to help with the communication of forestry development information?

A key element, as one councillor put it, is "relationship building", and engagement that is early, meaningful, and inclusive. Despite this, given the complexity of interactions between the Province, First Nations and forest industry as well as the elements of Aboriginal rights and title, it is sometimes difficult for local government to know "who is in charge", who holds relevant information, and where engagement is supposed to occur. Some councillors feel that the Province needs to be clearer on the role that it wants local governments to take when it comes to forestry management in rural areas.

Some local governments expressed dissatisfaction with the Operational Issues Forums (OIFs) and indicated a lack of direct engagement between the OIFs and communities. There is varied awareness about these forums, with some communities not being aware of them. It was suggested that OIFs should establish for themselves clear topics where engagement with communities is required, such as fire proofing programs, and engagement for Timber Supply Reviews. There was also interest in an opportunity for the local government representatives to observe the meetings (and not just a meet and greet over breakfast) in order to better understand how the forums function.

Some local governments continue to struggle with non-industry forest users, such as range tenure holders.

Improved Communication Materials

Local government representatives shared the concern that Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP) content is not clear and readily available, and sometimes the complete content (all attachments) is not always provided for community members to review. In some cases an independent viewpoint on proposed forestry activities would help to build community trust. In some cases materials presented by industry were too technical and did not provide the desired level of transparency. For example, FSPs seem cryptic, hard to read, too technical for non-forestry people. They also cover too large an area and don't provide any information on where logging and road building will actually take place. It's difficult for local government (or others) to truly engage on more site specific issues when asked to comment on broad areas. It was noted that where FSPs have been signed off by Professional Agrologists and Biologists (operating within their scope of practice) information is disseminated in a less technical fashion.

Local governments want to understand the cumulative impact of the various industry/BCTS harvest plans on the landscape and suggest integrated mapping that shows all development being proposed in conjunction with existing activities. It was noted that it would be helpful to be able to access a diagram of where all the players are going to be working on the landscape (logging, hauling and road building) in any given year.

- The public wants to see a 5, 10, 20 year plan for the areas around them, from all contractors and resource users, to see cumulative impacts. Some companies have been good at this and other companies not so good. Or even certain branches of a company better than others. There needs to be a standard or guidelines for this type of information.
- Some success has been achieved by local governments holding multi-agency open houses for the public to discuss specific questions.
- Local elected officials identified a need for improved information sharing and communication for:
 - regulations and policy on air shed quality and wood debris burning
 - timber utilization and waste reduction
 - availability of wood fiber (shavings) for cattlemen industry
 - AAC determinations, including community forest agreements
 - fisheries and salmon habitat
 - wildlife management
 - range resources
 - tourism
 - carbon accounting
- Big licensees have greater capacity and should help out smaller licensees and First Nations in developing communications material.
- Distil the FSP to a concise summary of “laymen’s terms” and harvest plans so that it takes companies less time to consult and the public is better informed.

Timing of Communication

Local governments need proper advance notice of proposed forestry activities. For example, the notification of a BCTS public information meeting being held in one month after advertisement, does

not provide adequate time for the community to assess the proposed activity. Annual meetings between licensees and local government were suggested to address complex and ongoing forestry issues. Regularly scheduled meetings could also avoid issue-driven discussions that arise when things are confrontational – ongoing information on forest management would be more appreciated than waiting until an issue has forced discussions.

Local governments would like to be considered a priority for notifications and the sharing of information. One elected official spoke about having to “fight tooth and nail” to get information from the district office, which undermined a government-to-government (local-to-provincial) basis for information flow regarding forest industry operations. An example is that if work plans change, these changes should be communicated as those changes are made, especially if they create safety issues or unanticipated impacts for other people on the land.

Examples of Real-World Improvements in Communication

- For example, Hazelton endorsed their local forest industry as sustainable and acknowledged that the families in their community benefitted from having these jobs.
- Communities can also recognize educational opportunities related to the forest sector, such as the forest worker training initiative supported by BCTS and the scholarship and apprentice programs supported by COFI.
- The South OIF initiated local government breakfast meetings.
- A positive example was expressed by Fraser Lake, where a forestry issues/engagement process has commenced with their two First Nations and the forest industry.
- Some communities have had very successful Community Forest Agreements that not only connect local governments to forestry workers and First Nations, but generate a direct economic benefit to their community. Community Forest Agreements often allow local governments to have forest professionals ‘on staff’, and they become an important resource to allow the community to navigate forest management discussions with other licensees and government. A mayor said that he now had frequent meetings with the district and industry representatives, as well as Woodlots and First Nation Woodland Licensees.
- The Kamloops Forest District’s example of providing an accessible on-line map of proposed forest activity was identified as something that might be useful everywhere.
- Overall, participants felt that communication between industry and communities has improved over the past year, but they stressed that “big picture” conversations need to continue to happen, and the Ministry needs to help build an inclusive forum for these conversations. This includes engaging with regional districts as well as municipalities.

Theme 3. Tenure Arrangements

An elected official identified that new forest tenure opportunities that have been awarded in their area have led to improved timber utilization and greater participation by First Nations in the local forest industry.

Examples of Real-World Improvements in Tenure Arrangements

- For example, Mackenzie is very happy with their Community Forest Agreement and relationship with McLeod Lake Indian Band (with whom they share the CFA). It has returned \$3 million over last two years, split 50:50 between the two parties.
- Other communities are looking for increased economic certainty for the industry through innovative tenures such as fibre for wood burning pellets.

Theme 4. Water

A key issue for all participants was hydrology, particularly in the context of climate change. The Forest Practices Board indicated that water is the most common issue that they get calls about.

Many communities need clarification on the linkage between the *Water Sustainability Act* and the *Forest Act*. It is unclear who has what level of authority over activities in watersheds, and how these activities are regulated. Watershed planning has worked for some communities, but the conversations need to be ongoing. The appropriate government staff need to be accessible and in some cases more proactive in reaching out to the general public.

Water protection requires broad attention to multiple activities including harvesting, road building and maintenance, cattle grazing, and providing a water supply to communities. Communities want to see an integrated approach to all of these uses on the landscape to avoid ineffective protection of the water. For example, if grazing was restricted to maintain water quality but then harvesting occurred and caused increased sedimentation, the desired goal of maintaining water quality would be lost.

Example of Real-World Improvements in Water

- Many communities have seen more collaboration among water users, which is building a stronger collective voice for watershed protection and conscientious water use.

Theme 5. Land Use Planning and Consultation

Communities feel uninformed about re-allocations of timber to First Nations, and have a lack of clarity around jurisdictional boundaries among BCTS volume-based licenses and their AAC, indigenous communities, and local governments.

A significant challenge is integrating the information within the FSPs from all the companies in an area, in order to gauge what forest activities may occur on the surrounding land base over the coming decades. But where is this integration being done? Communities want reassurance that the land is being managed after harvesting, that roads are stable, and that the land is re-generating. It was suggested that taking elected officials or municipal boards on tours can be very beneficial, as it opens the door for questions and concerns to be expressed.

Site specific issues seem to drive conflict, and critical resources remain a focus (e.g., old growth).

Example of Real-World Improvements in Land Use Planning and Consultation

- Several communities expressed their satisfaction with the community forest program, which is seen as a more collaborative arrangement for local forest land.

Theme 6. Wildfire

For many southern interior communities, addressing the immediate and long-term impacts from wildfires was a priority for discussions. However, there was also a wildfire-specific discussion forum at the 2017 UBCM Convention, therefore wildfire was not a key topic for the community engagement forum.

Communities sought more guidance on updating their fire mitigation plans for the wildland-urban interface, and education to better understand the ‘fuel mitigation cycle’. Regional integration of community fire plans needs to be done considering that these larger fires are now spanning multiple communities. For example, a regional fire plan would help coordinate more effective and continuous fire break construction. While some elected officials spoke to the need for quick action with respect to salvage and rehabilitation considering the enormity of the situation, other communities cautioned against a ‘timber grab’, and want to make sure that any salvage harvesting is necessary and done appropriately.

Attendees were reminded that UBCM administers a funding program for wildfire mitigation activities.

Examples of Real-World Improvements for Wildfire

- There was a broad appreciation for the increased level of collaboration around Wildland Urban Interface fuel management plans, wildfire response planning, and updating community fire plans. An example provided was the continuation of the Slocan Valley plan for fuel management and forest products, which was described as a ‘high caliber, integrated plan’ for the community forest that was well received by the public.
- An elected official from a wildfire impacted community spoke highly of the response by all levels of government to the wildfires they experienced.

Concluding Remarks

At the 2017 conference, UBCM participants generally felt that communication between the Province, industry and communities has improved since the previous discussion in 2016, but, they stressed that further improvements were needed along with an ability to engage in “big picture” conversations.

However, even with these initial positive steps, BC communities have made it clear that local government is more than a stakeholder to forestry in BC, it is another order of Government. The Community Charter sets out principles that guide the relationship between local government and the Province. These include:

- Provincial and local governments are to foster a cooperative working relationship based on mutual respect
- Local governments need to have the powers that allow them to fulfill their responsibilities.
- The Province must provide adequate notice and consult with local governments when considering provincial actions that directly affect local government interests.
- Communities have different needs and circumstances that require different approaches.

While the Province may have enabled the forest industry to have significant autonomy through the Forest and Range Practices Act’s dependence on professional reliance, those forests remain a

public resource and the management of the forests directly impact the local communities. As noted in 2016, UBCM expects the Province to ensure that any resource management responsibilities that the forest industry has taken on, on behalf of the Province, are delivered in accordance with the principles of the Community Charter.

Moving forward, given the growth of a positive working relationship between UBCM and the Province, communities are hopeful that the small improvements in community engagement in forestry will continue to be expanded into significant improvements.

Local government also recognizes that it must take specific action to improve their engagement with forestry activities. This summary report highlights real-world improvements since 2016, in order to support their application elsewhere in the province and to continue the conversation .

We all share the responsibility for improved communications, managing the public resources which we are entrusted with, supporting sustainability of our natural resources which in turn will support sustainable economic sectors and strong, resilient communities across British Columbia.