



Our File: 0400-20-MOF

March 15, 2024

Ministry of Forests
PO Box 9049 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
by email: FOR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Attn: Honourable Bruce Ralston

Dear Minister Ralston

Re: Enhanced Provincial Support for the Port Alberni Mill

I am writing on behalf of the Municipality of Port Alberni to request enhanced provincial support for the Port Alberni paper mill and its workers represented by Unifor Locals 592 and 686. With the current challenges in the global paper market, we are increasingly concerned about the long-term future of this site, which is both our biggest employer and taxpayer in Port Alberni. To lose the paper mill would be devastating to residents who are directly and indirectly dependent on Paper Excellence for their employment, and to the Municipality, which annually receives \$4.9 million in property taxes from Paper Excellence, accounting for more than 15.57 per cent of the tax base.

This letter delves into specific operational aspects and policies impacting the mill's sustainability and productivity.

- **Coast Fibre Recovery Zone (FRZ) Maintenance:** We understand that the FRZ has helped increase the availability of logs by ensuring more comprehensive utilization of logs and reducing waste in the bush. This zone is crucial for supplying economical pulp logs to the mill. We urge the continuation and possibly the expansion of this zone to sustain and enhance these benefits.
- **Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC) Funding:** The FESBC plays a pivotal role in facilitating the utilization of wood that would otherwise be uneconomical. The long-term commitment to FESBC funding would support continuity and expansion of projects to support this work.
- **Support for the Sawmill Sector:** The success of mills like Paper Excellence is closely linked to a robust sawmill sector. Issues such as the backlog of cutting permits, currently numbering around 700 provincially, and the performance of BC Timber Sales, are major concerns. These issues reduce the overall wood availability and impact the supply of residual chips, vital for the Port Alberni mill's operations. Prompt resolution of these issues is critical for maintaining a steady log flow.

- **Promotion of Commercial Thinning Practices:** Following insights from successful international models like Finland, we advocate for increased commercial thinning in BC. This practice not only enhances fibre production but also serves as an effective fire management tool, reducing wildfire risks. Implementing such practices will benefit both the industry and the communities.
- **Enhanced Support for the Wildfire Risk Reduction (WRR) Program:** While the WRR program has predominantly been focused on the interior regions, its applicability and expansion to coastal areas are becoming increasingly important due to longer, drier summers and heightened wildfire risks. The program's effectiveness in regions like the Kootenays, where it has aided in fireproofing communities and reducing wildfire intensity, should be a model for similar initiatives on the coast.

The combined impact of these specific areas of focus - the FRZ, FESBC funding, sawmill sector support, commercial thinning practices, and the WRR program - is vital for the continued success and sustainability of the Port Alberni mill and the high-paying unionized jobs that it provides in the municipality and the regional economy.

We appreciate the Ministry's attention to these matters and look forward to collaborative efforts involving the City of Port Alberni, Paper Excellence mill workers and the broader community towards innovative and sustainable forestry practices that align with provincial goals.

Thank you for considering our request for enhanced support.

Yours truly,
CITY OF PORT ALBERNI



Sharie Minions
Mayor

c: M. Fox, Chief Administrative Officer
D. Monteith, Director of Corporate Services
Mayor R. Douglas, Municipality of North Cowichan