



United Steelworkers Wood Council

Jeff Bromley
Council Chair

For Immediate Release:

USW Wood Council Locals in B.C. received the “Old Growth Strategic Review” report but caution BC jobs must not only be protected, they need to be grown.

Socio-economic understanding and impacts in decision making is vital.

Burnaby, BC – The United Steelworkers (USW) Wood Council of B.C. Locals 1-1937, 1-2017, 1-423, 1-417, 1-405 and 2009 received the Old Growth Strategic Review report released Friday.

The report presented, clearly has a panel tilted to the input of the Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (ENGO's) rather than the input it received from workers, industry and the communities that they work and operate in.

“It’s concerning that the old growth report is largely silent on the issues raised by workers, industry and communities and completely silent on possible socio-economic impacts”, offered Jeff Bromley, USW Wood Council Chair. “Any restriction on access to Old Growth forests must have the known and measurable impacts applied before any determination is made. Further restrictions on harvesting rights in the Working Forest will ultimately result in layoffs and hinder the growth and viability of the industry. It needs to be understood that the first and often only casualty of these type of initiatives are workers, families and the small, rural, resource-dependent communities in which they live.”

The USW knows that we are not alone in wanting to protect and grow jobs in the forest industry as getting more jobs per cubic meter from our renewable crown forests are an important part of the provincial government’s stated mandate. We continue to support that mandate.

The USW is also supportive of the reports recommendation of using a “science based” approach in decision making, which we believe is necessary to reduce the emotional decision making that has often guided previous government’s decisions. However, we caution that the report itself is reflective of the panel’s acceptance of ENGO’s perspective rather than utilizing “science based” facts. The USW was hopeful that a positive result of the report would lead to an end of the valley-by-valley approach, which historically only leads to confrontation and uncertainty, but we will reserve judgement on that until we see what parts of the report the government may implement.

The USW Wood Council is supportive of the extensive consultation (36 month timeline) suggested in the report. It is critical that government fully consults first nations, workers, industry and other stakeholders in the sector. That consultation needs to be in-depth, meaningful and definitely must have extensive knowledge and understanding of the socio-economic importance of our renewable resource as a guide to any decisions that are made.

“The report’s recommendations support inclusion and consultation of First Nations, the commitment to reconciliation and a science-based approach that will have all stakeholders at the table, which we support,” said Brian Butler, president of USW Local 1-1937, which represents over 5000 forest workers on Vancouver Island and BC’s Coast. *“That approach will enable all stakeholders to have a strong voice in this process and have the ability to see the science and fully understand other viewpoints. Our Union will be at the table to ensure our members’ livelihoods and their communities are heard and protected.”*

This report can be seen as a positive step in the process to ultimately provide certainty in the industry that can facilitate the investment and growth British Columbians deserve from their renewable public resource. Actions taken by the government following the report will ultimately determine if that indeed holds true.

The USW Wood Council represents over 12,000 forestry workers across BC in the province’s Northern and Southern Interior as well as the Coastal forest industry, where any restrictions on Old Growth and reductions in annual allowable cut (AAC) would hit the hardest.

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