



## **BC Tree Planters Want Premier to Present Provincial Forest Health Strategy at Copenhagen**

In a year when British Columbia produced more tons of wildfire smoke than it did lumber, the province's tree planters want Premier Campbell to announce in Copenhagen how his government's climate change strategy will deal with B.C.'s ominous forest health crisis.

"The Premier and his government have shown exceptional leadership in terms of an agenda to address climate change," said John Lawrence President of the Western Silvicultural Contractors' Association (WSCA). "Yet in BC, known across the country and around the world for its forests, the government has been remarkably silent on how it will include forests in the province's response to climate change."

BC's forests are vulnerable to a host of climate related catastrophes, the most notable at this time being the Mountain Pine Beetle infestation. The forested landscape is also under attack by other bugs and blights, as well as increasingly severe wildfires. These are all working to undermine and destroy the forests' health, productivity and diversity. According to climate change experts, as millions of hectares of the province's ailing forests continue to decay and burn, they will contribute huge volumes of greenhouse gas and pollutants into the earth's atmosphere.

"If both the provincial and federal governments are serious about acting on climate change they have to deal with B.C.'s forest health crisis. Otherwise we miss a vital opportunity to reduce emissions," said Lawrence.

Tree planters believe there is a virtuous cycle that can be created between restoring the province's forests, mitigating climate change, and boosting rural resource economies.

"BC has always been a leader in terms of natural forest management and forest restoration, with a proven capacity to implement large scale programs," said Lawrence. "It is time for both the federal and provincial governments to recognize that our forests are very much a part of storing and sequestering carbon and reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

Over the long term forests and forest products will be the cornerstone of the new green economy. But in order for B.C. to maintain its advantage in growing forests it needs to act quickly to include this natural resource in its climate change strategy; otherwise the silviculture sector will lose its capacity to deliver an innovative restoration program.



The number of seedlings planted in B.C. will soon be only half what it was a few years ago. Other corresponding forestry activities such as plantation tending and surveying are also in decline. All this is leading to the loss of nurseries and companies which are needed to grow and plant trees as part of a complete climate change strategy for the province.

“It is time for the Premier and his government to bring the Federal government on side and go beyond the rhetoric of “zero net deforestation” and a 33% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and outline clearly how they plan to address the threat to the health of BC’s forests as part of its much heralded climate action agenda,” Lawrence said.

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