

COMMUNITY FORESTRY STRATEGIES OF SURVIVING THE U.S.-CANADA SOFTWOOD TARIFF DISPUTE AND THE GLOBAL MARKET

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ABSTRACT

Canada is a nation of vast spaces, with extensive forests that cover 418 million hectares. Most of the forests are owned by the public, with 71% owned by the provinces and an additional 23% owned by the federal (national) government. The remaining 6% of the forests are privately owned with varying degrees of corporate and small-scale forestry across the country. The forests have a number of roles or uses with heritage forests (left in their natural states) accounting for 22.8 million hectares, and protection forests of 27.5 million hectares being excluded from timber harvesting. A total of 235 million hectares of forests are deemed to be commercial, capable of producing timber along with other benefits, with 119 million hectares (28.5%) of the total forest area being managed primarily for timber production. Canada's forests can be broken down into three main categories comprising of 67% being softwoods, 15% hardwoods, and 18% mixed woods. Forestry plays a key role in the Canadian economy with over 877 thousand jobs in the wood and paper industries or related organisations. Forest products are one of the largest exports and in 1998 contributed \$31.7 billion to the country's trade balance—an amount similar to the total of energy, fishing, mining and agriculture combined.

This paper will focus on what are the driving forces behind the community forest managers of four community forests in British Columbia. These four community forests have been established for a minimum of five years and for some as long as 40 years, and are located in very distinct parts of the province, have different forest types and operability situations as well as socio-economic settings. The four community foresters have significantly different backgrounds and their own strategies for running the forests, which make each of the forests very distinct in terms of operations—even though all are community forests.

Changing forestry legislation, tenure uncertainty and change, the poor global market for forest products and the ongoing U.S.-Canada Softwood Tariff dispute all contribute to an even more challenging environment in which to run a community forest.

Despite these challenges, the community forests have managed to survive, and this paper will review their strategies and the personal approaches of the community foresters in charge.

Keywords: Community Forestry, economics, markets, strategies.

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