

NEWS RELEASE

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Provincial Election Platforms Show Support for Growth of BC's Community Forest Program

VICTORIA and the Traditional Territory of the Lekwungen Peoples – As British Columbia prepares for the 2024 Provincial Election, political parties have included specific support for expanding the community forest program in their platforms.

Community forests are long term, area-based tenures managed by local communities to reflect local priorities and values. With 61 community forests currently operating across the province, and growing interest in local resource management, the program is gaining broad recognition and support. For over 20 years, the BC Community Forest Association (BCCFA) has championed the community forest program, highlighting its ability to foster social, economic, ecological, and cultural resilience.

“Community forests represent a future where forest management decisions, investments and benefits are realized in the community and for the land. It is great to see a recognition of community forests in BC as a way forward as we grapple with climate change, wildfire risk, watershed management and Indigenous reconciliation.” - Randy Spyksma, President, BCCFA

At the mid-way point in the election campaign, the BC NDP have proposed a doubling of the area in the community forest program, and the BC Greens have proposed that 20% of the provincial Allowable Annual Cut be allocated to community forests.

While others have yet to make specific commitments, *“We look forward to possible support from the other political parties regarding community forestry,”* said Spyksma.

Community forests contribute to local economies, create local jobs, foster partnerships, and support wildfire resiliency, education and recreation. Importantly, half of all community forests in BC are either held by First Nations or involve First Nations partnerships.

Quotes:

“Our nations have expressed support for the continuance and growth of community forests. Community forests not only contribute to the diversity of tenures in a timber supply area but also provide diversity, capacity, and a voice on how our rural communities take on the responsibility of the well-being of the land for current and future generations. The stewardship of the land is all our responsibility, and we are all in this together.” - Lennard Joe, CEO, BC First Nations Forestry Council

“Our forest sector is the largest driver of prosperous BC forest communities. Strengthening its relationships and the direct benefits it accrues is advantageous to all involved. Community forests are a key ingredient towards that success.” - Bob Brash, Executive Director, Truck Loggers Association

“The Village of Fraser is encouraged by the growing momentum for expanding community forests, especially with the challenges our region has faced with the closure of two sawmills in the past year. Community forests are more important than ever in fostering economic resilience for both First Nations and local communities, offering a pathway to recovery while supporting wildfire protection and sustainable land management. As we move forward, it is essential that we build partnerships that honour both Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships, ensuring a sustainable and prosperous future for everyone in our region.” - Sarrah Storey, Mayor, Village of Fraser Lake

“Community forests play a vital role not only in the economy of rural British Columbia but also in the sustainable management of one of its most valuable resources. The Interior Logging Association Board of Directors and its members highly value our relationship with the BCCFA and the vital opportunities this collaboration provides. Together, we work to ensure the health and protection of rural communities, while fostering economic growth and environmental stewardship.” - Todd Chamberlain, General Manager, Interior Logging Association

“Community forests increase citizen awareness and participation in forestry, opening a path for innovation and positive relationships with the forest industry. Growing the Community Forests program will provide an opportunity to support, stabilize and ultimately grow the BC-based wood products businesses operating in our local communities.” - Paul Rasmussen, Interior Lumber Manufacturers’ Association

“The success of the community forest program is a testament to the ingenuity, dedication, and strong relationships between industry, government and academic colleagues. In the face of the challenges within the forest sector, community forests showcase how sustainable practices, collaborative management, and community-driven initiatives can drive positive change while building resilience in both forests and the communities that depend on them.” - John Betts, Executive Director, Western Forestry Contractors Association

“We support the expansion of community forests as they play a vital role in demonstrating the value of forestry to the local community, especially when revenues are reinvested into local initiatives. This helps residents appreciate the broader benefits, rather than just seeing trees being cut down in their viewscape without understanding the community gains. It is important that sound science guides the determination of the allowable annual cut, ensuring that sustainable volumes are harvested in a way that generates economic value for the community. Additionally, these harvested volumes can support value-added manufacturing facilities within

the community or surrounding areas." - Ken Kalesnikoff, President & CEO, Kalesnikoff Lumber and Mass Timber

"Community forests in British Columbia are living examples of how stewardship and sustainability can flourish when local hands care for the land. They are more than just woodlands; they are the roots of resilient communities, where economic growth, environmental protection, and cultural values meet. That is why it is so significant to see the recognition in election platforms to increase the amount and size of community forests in our province." - Brian Frenkel, Vanderhoof Community Forest

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For more information on the BC Community Forest Association visit www.bccfa.ca

The three major party platforms can be found here:

- [Conservative](#)
- [Green](#)
- [NDP](#)