

Greater Vernon Chamber & Tolko Lead Forestry Strategy Win

Policy urging strategic planning in forestry receives 99% support at Canadian Chamber AGM

VERNON—It's a sector that benefits more than 600 communities in Canada, directly employs more than 200,000 people and sees extensive stewardship planning to ensure the country's forests continue to thrive—even in the face of wildfires, droughts and pests.

In BC and in the North Okanagan, forestry is critical to both the economy and the changing environment. That's why The Greater Vernon Chamber recently attended the Canadian Chamber Annual General Meeting and Conference, held in Calgary, to introduce a policy that urges government to develop a comprehensive national forest and forestry sector strategy.

"The forest sector is facing a number of challenges, including climate change, fires, trade issues and changing global markets. As a large contributor to Canada's jobs and GDP (an estimated \$24.6 billion), we need to ensure this industry is sustainable for decades to come," says Greater Vernon Chamber president Kirndee Nahal. "This step is needed for the government to acknowledge and support our forestry industry and its significant potential to continue to contribute to Canada's economy."

Nahal and Greater Vernon Chamber general manager Dan Proulx attended the AGM to represent local members and present the policy outlining the need for a dedicated national strategy supporting forestry's growth, resilience and role in climate change mitigation—investing in planning the same way government has for critical minerals, hydrogen and more.

The forestry and forest sector strategy policy resolution received 99 per cent support from the nearly 375 chamber executives and business leaders from across the nation gathered to discuss issues affecting the prosperity of Canadian businesses.

To develop the policy, Greater Vernon Chamber worked with Janis Simpkins, vice president, Indigenous and government relations and sustainability, Tolko Industries. Simpkins says Tolko is thankful to Greater Vernon Chamber for their leadership of this initiative.

"It speaks volumes about the importance of the forestry sector to Canada's economic development; not only through the production of sustainable forest products, but as a low-

carbon building solution. As partners, we'll work together to leverage the potential of our forests and sustainable forest management in the battle against climate change while enhancing our resilience against increasing wildfire risks. The development and maintenance of healthy forest ecosystems will benefit Canadians for generations."

Derek Nighbor, Forest Product Association of Canada's president and CEO, says:

"In the wake of a wildfire season that stands out as one of Canada's most severe, Canada's forest sector welcomes the Vernon Chamber's call for a National Forestry Strategy. With this motion, the Chamber is recognizing the value of sustainable Canadian forestry and the critical role it plays in mitigating climate risk, providing stable employment, and sustaining resilient communities."

Proulx says the Chamber was proud to work with its member, Tolko Industries, to create this policy resolution.

"Being able to work with business to uncover issues and identify solutions that are converted into policy is fulfilling work," says Proulx. "Then to have that policy passed and gain the support and influence of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce to drive positive change for business at a national level so our member's voices are heard, that's impactful."

For more information, media can contact:

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