

Submitted By: Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

Theme: Economic Development

Title: Developing a Comprehensive National Forestry and Forest Sector Strategy

Description: The Canadian government has recognized the importance of strategic planning for critical sectors such as critical minerals, hydrogen, and nuclear. This resolution urges the government to extend similar strategic attention to the Forestry and Forest Sector, a significant contributor to the Canadian economy, that warrants a dedicated national strategy for its sustainable growth and resilience.

Background: Canada, home to nearly 9% of the world's forests^{1}, has a Forest Sector that contributes more than \$24.6 billion to Canada's GDP and supports over 200,000 direct jobs across the country^{2}. Yet, despite its economic, environmental, and social importance, there is no comprehensive national strategy to address the unique challenges and opportunities of this sector.

Canada's Forestry and Forest Sector has been impacted by several factors including climate change, wildfires, pests, trade issues, and a changing global market. These challenges are compounded by the lack of a unified, strategic approach that acknowledges the national significance of this sector and its potential to contribute even more to the Canadian economy and the fight against climate change.

The development of strategic frameworks for critical minerals, hydrogen, and nuclear power underlines the Canadian government's ability and commitment to catalyze key sectors through targeted planning and investment. The time is ripe for the Forestry and Forest Sector to receive a similar strategic focus.

Developing a Forestry and Forest Sector Strategy is of national significance, with impacts across all regions of Canada, from British Columbia's lumber industry to Ontario's pulp and paper sector, and Quebec's forest-based bioenergy. The issue is both current and timely, especially considering the increasing global focus on sustainable economies and climate change mitigation^{3}.

Recommendations: That the Government of Canada:

1. Form a dedicated task force to develop a comprehensive national Forestry and Forest Sector Strategy.
2. Engage with all relevant stakeholders, including businesses, Indigenous communities, labor groups, environmental organizations, and provincial and territorial governments in developing the strategy.
3. Ensure the strategy focuses on sustainable growth, resilience to changing climatic conditions, wildfire mitigation, innovation, trade competitiveness, workforce development and support for communities.
4. Consider the potential of the forest sector in the fight against climate change and include measures to support the carbon sequestration potential of Canadian forests.
5. Review and update the strategy regularly to adapt to evolving circumstances and emerging opportunities.

Footnotes:

{1} Natural Resources Canada, "The State of Canada's Forests. Annual Report 2022."

{2} Forest Products Association of Canada, "Economic Impact of the Forest Industry."

{3} Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability."