

Niedersächsischer Landtag ☆ Abg. Stefan Wenzel ☆
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Mr. Claude Richmond MLA
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
of British Columbia
Victoria – British Columbia
Canada

16.08.2004

Dear Mr. Claude Richmond,

Thank you for your reply concerning the forest industry in British Columbia. I read the facts and figures which you gave me with great interest, but I have to admit that they did not fully convince me. After doing a little research on the subject, there are some questions I would like to ask you and some answers I would like to get.

For example about the amount of forest that is harvested each year. If you harvest one third of one per cent of your forests per year, it'll take you only 30 years to destroy 10 per cent of the forest you have now, not taking into account all the original rainforest that has already vanished since the beginning of settlement in British Columbia and especially during the last 30 years. You also forgot to mention that the speed in which you harvest the forest has been tripled within the last 30 years, a process which is very likely to continue. The government you are working for allows 70 million m³ to be cut down each year (which is already more than ever before) and plans to increase this number to 100 million m³. All of this makes me believe that it will take you far less than 30 years to destroy the next 10 per cent of your original forest, maybe as little as 10 years. And what will happen within the following 50 years? I'm still deeply concerned about the future of BC's ancient forests.

And what makes you say that over half of BC's forest land will never be harvested? Yes, it's true that 50 % cent of BC's land has not been developed or opened up so far, but you've only protected 12% of all of it (and most of this area are mountains, not useable for logging anyway) so that it can't be used by the forest companies. These companies, which have been very good at harvesting more and more forest every year over the last decades, would probably show great interest in logging the rest of BC as well once it is accessible. This makes also your statement saying „more than 80 per cent of BC's forest have never been harvested in over 120 years of commercial forestry“ somewhat meaningless. Yes, those 80% have not been harvested so far, but who says they won't be within the next years? As you said yourself, BC has some of the most effective and comprehensive forest practices in the world. And one should not forget that those 80% you are talking about are 80% of all the forest in BC. When it comes to smaller areas, I found that the numbers are very different. For example, 75% of the forest on Vancouver Island have been logged during the last 150 years. Do you still think that this will cause no harm to nature?

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It is true that the companies are forced by the law to replant the logged area, and that they actually do it. But it is also true that newly planted trees are not and will never be the same as a rain forest that had thousand of years to grow. Not replaceable parts of the flora vanish with each square kilometre of original forest that is logged, taking the living space for not replaceable animals that live there with it. Not even if you gave these new trees hundreds of years to grow they could replace the ancient rainforest. Which for a fact you have already decided not to do, since the plan for those areas includes new logging within the next 40 to 140 years.

I'd also like to learn more about the eco-certifications you are talking about. What are the criteria for those? Where and from whom do the companies get them?

Last but not least you informed me about the importance of the forest industry for the wealth of your Province. The 26.000 jobs you mentioned, did you count them before or after 25% per cent of the jobs in the industry vanished during the last 4 years? 95% of the trees that are cut down are taken away for further working processes. Would you think that this has something to do with the loss of jobs? I would also ask you to think about the fact that already 1997 only 5.5 per cent of all the jobs in BC were in the forest industry, but 12.8 in the tourism industry. Furthermore, the \$67,000 you gave as a average annual salary for forest workers are simply incorrect. I followed the links of the official BC statistics homepage and found \$50,000 to be the correct number.

I hope you acknowledge that I'm by now informed about all the different aspects of the issue, but stay with the opinion I had before. I'd be delighted if you'd read my letter thoroughly and give the subject a second set of thoughts.

Yours

Stefan Wenzel MdL Fraktionsvorsitzender
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