

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

August 12, 2008

The Editor  
Prince George Citizen

There are few communities in British Columbia that are better positioned to take advantage of the forestry opportunities ahead than Fort St. James, which enjoys a strong timber supply and is home to operators who have confidence in the future.

Many industry players are already looking to the forecast rebound in market conditions, as demonstrated by Conifex, which recently purchased the idled Pope and Talbot mill. Likewise, KDL opened a new post and rail mill about six months ago, using timber that isn't suitable for dimension lumber. And let's not forget the strength of long-standing operators such as Apollo, which continues to operate both its main mill and its remanufacturing plant.

Through the Forestry Roundtable, we are exploring what further actions are needed to ensure a long-term, sustainable future. There are tremendous opportunities ahead. We are looking at changes to the building code to encourage greater use of wood products in commercial and institutional construction. We need to pursue the economic benefits from the growing market for carbon sequestration by becoming a world leader in growing trees. By highlighting how wood construction is more earthquake resistant, we're working to increase exports to China and other Asia Pacific markets. And by supporting the development of bioenergy, we can achieve significant economic diversification and environmental benefits for our communities.

We are also helping communities cope with the temporary downturn. Fort St. James has received \$2 million from the Community Development Trust for transitional assistance for older workers, training assistance for younger workers, and job opportunities. The trust has issued \$112,000 to the Nak'azdli, who are using the funds to create jobs in restoring the historic Duzcho Trail, to help keep our skilled workers in Fort St. James for when market conditions recover, plus restore an important heritage resource.

By working together – communities, First Nations, industry, and governments – we can ensure a bright future for our forest industries.

Sincerely,  
Pat Bell  
Minister of Forests and Range