

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Jan. 30, 2009

The Editor
Vancouver Sun

RE: Not much of a 'partnership' on the public side of equation

Dear Editor:

For the benefit of your readers I wish to clarify information around the Mackenzie mill purchase in your January 29th article, "Not much of a 'partnership' on the public side of equation."

The Mackenzie pulp mill was never owned by the Province, never sold by the Province, and was never a public-private partnership with the Province. In October 2007, the previous owners, Pope & Talbot, entered creditor protection. PricewaterhouseCoopers was appointed as the official receiver of Pope & Talbot's assets, including the Mackenzie and Harmac pulp mills, and was responsible for selling them.

In September 2008, the Supreme Court of British Columbia approved the sale of the Mackenzie mill to Worthington. Any background checks on the nature of the company submitting the offer would have been the responsibility of the receiver in this court-approved process.

Worthington claims it has been a victim of the global credit crunch that hit this fall. Regardless of the circumstances, the province stepped in earlier this week to prevent a potential environmental catastrophe.

The province's top priority is protecting the residents of Mackenzie and the environment. The Mackenzie pulp mill must continue to be maintained at a warm idle to prevent the inadvertent release of dangerous chemicals stored on-site.

That's why the Minister of Environment signed an order under Section 87 of the Environmental Act, declaring an environmental emergency at the site. Under Section 87, employees at the mill have been ordered to maintain the site to prevent pipes and other equipment from freezing.

The Province is pursuing different legal options to recover costs from the mill owners.

Pat Bell
Minister of Forests and Range