

---

## OPINION-EDITORIAL

### **LOG BAN NOT A SOLUTION, REVITALIZING INDUSTRY IS**

**By Michael de Jong**  
**Minister of Forests**  
March 22, 2005

It's no surprise that certain so-called environmental groups are attempting to stir the pot of the log export issue at this time. They are taking full advantage of a fixed election date to try and make British Columbians believe a story about log exports that is based on nothing but bad math and theatrics.

Watching Mr. Wu and the Western Canada Wilderness Committee cry crocodile tears for forestry workers is more than a little hard to take when you consider the lengths they, and other environmental groups, have gone to over the years to put loggers, truck drivers and mill workers across Vancouver Island out of work permanently.

What's really bothering Mr. Wu is that for the first time in years we're actually harvesting the full allowable annual cut on the Coast. What's really bothering the environmental movement is that employment opportunities in forestry are growing for the first time in a long while. Remember, this same environmental group has participated in market campaigns against key customers in Europe and the U.S.

They are the ones who consistently misrepresent the facts about our world-class forest practices regime. Now that the motivation of these groups is out in the open, let's take a look at the numbers those same groups don't want you to have.

In 2004, just over one million cubic metres of timber from public forests were exported as logs. A million of anything sounds like a lot, but in fact, it is just 1.45 per cent of the province's allowable annual cut and a decline over the last three years.

So are these historic rates of exports of public timber? Absolutely not. The peak of log exports came in 1987 with 4.27 per cent of the cut.

In fact, the overall trend of log exports from public lands under this government is down and continues to drop. Compare this with what happened under the previous government when log exports climbed – yes, climbed – by 15 times. Under the NDP, Crown log exports went from 65,000 cubic metres in 1997 to just under 1 million cubic metres by the end of 2000. Where was the umbrage of the environmental groups then?

This government inherited a rapidly rising level of exports from Crown lands and has been able to stabilize and even bring down those levels. This is the essential information that politically-motivated opponents don't want the public to have. Another item they neglect to share with the public is the fact that British Columbia, like other forest jurisdictions, also imports logs – in the range of 400,000 to 600,000 cubic metres per year.

I'm pleased by the downward trend in public log exports. That's because I and my colleagues would rather keep logs at home where they can create jobs and opportunities. What's the best way to do that? By working to revitalize our forest industry so it is stronger and more diversified so it can make use of those logs.

Let's remember that the majority of log exports from B.C. actually come from private timberlands, not public ones. Much of this private land is located on southeast Vancouver Island, where 2.1 million hectares were granted to railway entrepreneurs in 1884.

This province does try to keep logs in B.C. Exporters must advertise logs for sale to B.C. mills first. Only if there is no reasonable purchase offer will we grant export permission. When the logs are exported, government collects a fee in lieu of manufacture here. This fee was increased significantly this summer for exports from the Coast.

To sum up, if creating jobs and wealth in B.C. is our goal, it is illogical to assume that ending the sale of a fraction of our logs to customers outside this province would achieve that. The real solution lies in strengthening our industry from the inside.

Through the Forestry Revitalization Plan we are putting more timber into the hands of communities, First Nations and value added manufacturers. These and other reforms are creating a foundation for an economically strong and diverse forest sector, which will generate well-paying, secure jobs and help generate the wealth to maintain the quality of life for all British Columbians.