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Bulkley-Morice Forest Landscape Plan Process Suggested Changes

Dear Mins. Ralston and Cullen:

We attended the meeting conducted in Smithers on April 4, 2024 concerning the Forest Landscape Planning process taking place in our area. At this presentation we noted that the slide in the PowerPoint presentation identifying the parties who will sit at the Planning Table include First Nations, Government and Industry. We understand and applaud the inclusion of the First Nations as a necessary partner in this process. We also acknowledge that the government has a critical role.

However, we understood that the whole point of this process was to begin to implement a government strategy that broadens its forestry priorities to include on an equal basis such values and concerns as biodiversity, climate change, forest health and other forest related interests besides forestry industry ones. By setting up a forum that does not include at critical points in the process, such as at the Planning Table, representatives of parties that focus on this broader range of values, the process seems self-defeating. Relegating representatives of these values to the technical committee level (as was indicated at the meeting) would suggest that these values are of a lower level of importance and priority.

If that's the case, then we are just back to where we started from and what's the point of this exercise? We suggest that the Planning Table consist of either just First Nations and the Province acting on a government-to-government level, or if industry is included then the table should also provide a seat for representatives of the non-commercial values that the government has identified as priority ones for protection.

If you agree with our suggestion that these additional concerns deserve a place at the Planning Table, then we suggest you create a space for our local Community Resources Board. That body has been serving as the oversight committee monitoring compliance with our local Land and Resources Management Plan/Sustainable Resources Management Plan. These community based, consensus plans were developed in the 1990's and 2000's to integrate and balance resource development with the types of additional values that should now be given priority in the FLP process. As such, the CRB is well qualified to serve in the role we are suggesting.

Wildlife for Tomorrow, Friends of Babine Lake, Bulkley Valley Stewardship Coalition