

SPEAKING NOTES

Doug Donaldson

Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural
Development

Mackenzie Matters rally

**Mackenzie Rec Centre
400 Skeena Drive
Mackenzie, BC**

Thursday, Aug. 22, 2019

1:30 p.m.

(Check Against Delivery)

ADVICE FOR SPEAKER:

Summary: Minister Donaldson will be speaking to mill workers, union and community leaders in Mackenzie about steps government is taking to support workers, families, businesses and communities impacted by mill closures and curtailments.

Additional speakers (TBC) include Donna Barnett MLA Caribou Chilcoltin, Mike Morris MLA Prince George North, Bob Zimmer MP Prince George, Peace River-Northern Rockies.

Additional Information:

- **July 23** – Forest Sector Renewal engagement session held in Mackenzie.
- **July 23** – Regional Economic Operations staff met with Mackenzie Mayor Joan Atkinson, CAO Dean McKinley, District Manager Ryan Bichon.
- **July 30** – Regional Economic Operations staff had second meeting with Mackenzie Mayor Joan Atkinson and staff.
- In discussions with FLNR ADM Richard Manwaring (week of Aug. 19), Mackenzie Mayor Joan Atkinson indicated there is interest in Mackenzie for a coalition process with local governments, First Nations, industry and labour (as referenced in the Premier's announcement at COFI this spring).

Audience and Anticipated Size:

The audience is expected to be sizeable – likely 200+, with local and regional media in attendance.

Speaking Time: Approx. 5 minutes

Contact Person:

Brett Lowther – A/Communications Director, FLNRORD – c: **250 812-1729**

Glen Plummer – A/Communications Manager, FLNRORD – C: **250 213-5667**

Jeremy Uppenborn – Sr. Public Affairs Officer, GCPE FLNRORD – c: **250 812-5731**

Agenda: TBD

Times are approximate:

XX p.m.	Minister Donaldson
XX:XX	Minister Donaldson provides remarks

Directions:

- I want to welcome everyone here today and thank you for coming out to make your voices heard.
- I want to first acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Tse'Khene (tse-kan-ay) peoples.
- It's not easy for a politician to stand in front of a community talking about tough times and challenges ahead, but that's what your community and others are dealing with.
- That's why the first thing I want to tell you is that this government supports workers and is looking for ways to support the community.
- You don't need me to tell you that the Interior forest industry is facing some challenging circumstances and you and your community are feeling the brunt of it.
- I could stand here and start throwing blame around about how we ended up where we are today.
- But I'm not here to do that.
- Everyone here knows about the history that led to this and casting blame does nothing to help you.
- Not a day goes by that I am not thinking about the workers and communities who are being affected by these closures and curtailments.
- As I said at the outset, this government is committed to being there for impacted workers and their communities.
- We want to do everything we can to ensure support systems are in place on behalf of forestry workers and their families – and we are taking action.
- My ministry, specifically BC Timber Sales, is currently in discussions with Conifex about how government can support their efforts to re-start their sawmill.

- We know re-starting the Conifex sawmill would provide support not only for the mill workers, but also downstream for businesses in the area that rely on the mill residuals including Conifex Power, East Fraser Fibre, and Paper Excellence.
- That's why we are doing everything we can to ensure there is fibre available for the Conifex sawmill.
- BC Timber Sales is working with Conifex to address some short-term fibre access issues and we are confident that those details will be worked out by the end of this month.
- It is our hope that this support from our government enables Conifex to re-start their sawmill here in Mackenzie in September.
- This is by no means the silver bullet that solves all of the issues impacting the region – we still have a lot of work ahead of us.
- To be blunt about it, we are cleaning up a mess that likely wouldn't exist if action had been taken 10 or even five years ago to diversify and get more value from the trees that are harvested.
- But like I said, I'm not here to talk to you about the past I'm here to talk about where we go from here.
- The forest sector is changing and I'm not going to sugar coat it, the future of this industry will not look much like the industry your grandparents or even your parents knew.
- Our government is facing up to the challenges in the Interior forest sector. We are going to do everything we can to make sure our industry stays competitive, and the people and communities that count on forestry jobs have a more secure future.
- Revitalizing forestry in this province is important and we want to make sure that we get it right – especially for communities like yours.
- That's why, as part of our revitalization plan, we are asking for local input and insight into how we want to shape a prosperous, competitive and culturally sensitive Interior future forest sector.

- It's also why our government invited coalitions in each timber supply area, comprised of industry, labour, First Nations and leaders in forest-dependent communities, to work together to develop a new vision for the Interior forest industry at the regional level.
- At the end of the day, our forests are here for the benefit of everyone.
- We need to make sure that the interests of all British Columbians are taken into account.
- While we are working to shape the future of B.C.'s forest industry, we are also taking action to address the issues facing families and communities here and now.
- We are now leading community transition responses for resource-based communities like yours experiencing significant job loss impacts through supports and services, including: job fairs; skills training and career counselling; support for families, as well as economic diversification strategies, with the end-goal for people being able to stay in their community.
- I have also let the federal government know that they also need to step up to the plate with funding for impacted workers and communities in B.C.
- And they also need to press the gas pedal on getting a softwood agreement because it's been long enough that our forest sector has been unfairly targeted by duties from our largest forest market.
- The challenges facing our forest sector today were building for a long time and it's going to take time to work our way through this.
- This is a complex issue that simply won't be fixed by a one-size fits all approach.
- Before I go, I do want to address one thing that frequently comes up as a possible solution – stumpage rates.

- It's very easy to suggest that government could simply reduce stumpage rates and this would miraculously solve many of the challenges facing the industry.
- However, this fails to recognize that stumpage rates are at the very heart of one of the longest running trade disputes between Canada and the U.S.
- One need only look at the latest trade news to see how the current U.S. government would likely respond if our, or any, government in Canada lowered stumpage rates.
- A long and protracted trade war with our neighbours to the south is certainly not going to help B.C.'s forest industry.
- Our government believes that people like you, people who rely on the forest industry should have a central role in charting the path forward for our forest sector.
- Working together, we will overcome the challenges we face today and develop a competitive, sustainable future for B.C.'s forest sector.
- Thank you.