



Minister Heyman Says Forestry Not the Primary Reason for Professional Reliance Review

By Kelly McCloskey, *Tree Frog News* Editor



Speaking at the Association of BC Forest Professionals AGM in Victoria on Friday, George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy said “ensuring the public interest and the environment are protected” is behind the government’s review of the role of professionals in resource management. Citing the Mount Polly mine disaster and the Hullcar Aquifer [agriculture] situation

as incidents that have created “public doubt”, Heyman added that the review is “not directed at professionals per se, but whether the system under which they operate is functioning properly”.

Although forestry was not the reason for the review Heyman noted that “all professions need to be included because there are inconsistencies across the associations” and “system challenges have been identified by the Forest Practices Board” in the practice of professional forestry. Quoting the Board, Heyman mentioned situations “where forestry development has put environmental and community values at risk, yet district managers could do little to protect the public interest”; and “where multiple licensees operating on the same landbase may [unwittingly] undermined each other’s action to protect a non-timber value”.

A few [paraphrased] questions posed by ABCFP CEO Christine Gelowitz to the Minister include:

Gelowitz: Is it your plan to return to a Forest Practices Code type of regulatory regime?

Heyman: We have no preconceived plans of what’s best although some changes to legislation are possible.

Gelowitz: Is multi-licensee conflict a professional reliance issue or a tenure system issue?

Heyman: It may be more of a systems issue, what tools and guidance are provided and if they are sufficient.



Jennifer McGuire, Christine Gelowitz and George Heyman



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Gelowitz: How much of the problem is really government reducing its field presence?

Heyman: Upping government staffing levels is not an objective per se but I feel capacity is too low for field officers to know enough about what is going on.

Gelowitz: Is the review about ensuring forest professionals are doing their job or is it about ensuring the system supports professional reliance?

Heyman: It's about whether the professional reliance model is working as it

should. Are the tools and other requirements in place to meet public expectations?

Gelowitz: Is professional reliance effective if it ends up with the minimal legal requirements?

Heyman: More prescriptive practices is not the answer. We need a broad outcomes approach that meets the needs of society – which likely means the minimal legal requirement will not suffice in the future.

Gelowitz: Will the review address the need for setting clear standards and address the challenge of cumulative effects?

Heyman: Yes, but in conjunction with other reviews and strategies. This includes the Environmental Assessment process and pending Species at Risk legislation and Climate Change Strategy. The objective is transparency so professionals—and everyone else—know what's expected.



Gelowitz: Based on what you've heard to date, what advice to you have for forest professionals?

Heyman: Don't be afraid of change. The intent is to move forward and assure the public's interest is met with a high degree of assurance and oversight.



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