

19 First Nations Sign Letter Calling-out Flawed and Disingenuous Process of Engagement on Modernization of Forest Policy in BC.

September 8, 2021 (Vancouver, BC) – The BC First Nations Forestry Council (the ‘Forestry Council’) has submitted an open letter to Premier Horgan expressing serious concerns with the engagement process used by the Ministry of Forest Lands, Natural Resources Operations & Rural Development (MFLNRORD) to involve First Nations in significant changes to forest policy.

19 BC First Nations and Indigenous Forestry Organizations have signed in support of the letter, calling for a meaningful consultation to ensure that First Nations’ rights, priorities and values are incorporated into the modernization of forest policy in BC.

In July 2021, FLNRORD sought input from Nations on proposed policy amendments through a letter sent to some Nations, with a final deadline for input of September 3, 2021.

“The timeline for consultation is disrespectful, compressed and expedited, and does not allow for meaningful and informed consultation,” tells Chief Bill Williams, President of the First Nations Forestry Council.

“Under the *Declaration Act*, changes being proposed to forest legislation, policies and regulations require the prior and informed consent of Nations; at the outset, not after the fact,” he adds.

Dr. Charlene Higgins, CEO of the Forestry Council adds: “How are Nations supposed to participate in an informed and meaningful manner if they don’t have the resources or technical capacity required to understand the implications of the proposed changes and submit answers to 90+ question into a “consultation portal”? A number of Nations have informed us they have not received a letter from the ministry regarding these proposed changes.”

“The solution is easy,” says Higgins. “The Forestry Council is calling on the Province for an extension until the end of the year, to allow the time needed to co-draft a revised version of the Intentions Paper that reflects First Nations rights and priorities in the modernization of forest policy in BC, and for us to do the technical work with the Nations to assist them in better understanding impacts and implications of the proposed policy changes.”

To read the full letter, [click here](#).