

# RECOGNITION, RESPECT & INFLUENCE

:  
the ABCFP External Communications Task Force  
for council consideration.

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## Executive Summary

Recognition, respect and influence. Our profession is not performing well in these areas today.

At various times over the association's 57-year history, members have raised concerns that not enough was being done in areas like promoting the profession, advocacy and public education. These three actions are essential to enable the association to fulfil its mandate under the *Foresters Act*.

At its March 2004 meeting, the Association of BC Forest Professionals' council approved the formation of a task force to recommend how the association's external communications might be improved. Following the development of terms of reference, the external communications task force met for the first time in July 2004. Subsequent meetings were held over the next few months to prepare a report for presentation to council in November 2004.

This report addresses the questions posed in the terms of reference and contains the task force's recommendations. It builds upon detailed background information and includes a future vision identified by the task force as the desired future state of the association relative to external communications. It also considers the objectives of external communications and the benefits and challenges facing the profession relating to these activities (or lack thereof).

If the vision in this report is accepted, we must find a route to attain the vision. It is unrealistic to expect the association could achieve such a vision in the short term. It will take some time to build strategies, raise resources and develop a mature external communications program. The task force recommends a three-phase approach with each phase building and expanding on the successes of the earlier phases.

Now is the time for the profession to speak up. We need to show the people of British Columbia that we take our role as stewards of BC's forest resources and our duty to protect and serve the public interest seriously.

How do we do it?

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# 1 Introduction

At various times over the association's 57-year history, members have raised concerns that not enough was being done in areas like promoting the profession, advocacy and public education. These concerns are not unique to our time, or indeed, even to our profession.

In British Columbia, the forestry profession was first created by the provincial government in 1947 to protect the public interest in the practice of professional forestry. The profession does not operate in a vacuum. Regular communication with a wide variety of external stakeholders—primarily the public and the forest sector—is essential to enable the association to fulfil its mandate under the *Foresters Act*. Ineffective external communications would seriously undermine the association's efforts, reduce its influence, hamper efforts to attract new people into the profession and possibly lead the public or the government to question the necessity of a regulated forestry profession.

Recent changes to provincial forestry legislation have given the resource professions a more autonomous role in managing and caring for British Columbia's forest resources. As a result, the forestry profession will come under the microscope of public opinion more than ever before. Thus, the importance of open and effective communication with external stakeholders has never been greater.

There have been many efforts in the past by members and councillors to organize a concerted external communications effort within the association. These efforts have had limited effect for a number of reasons, including the following:

- the lack of a mandate for advocacy;
- the scarcity of resources and the demands of other priorities; and
- a wide spectrum of views on forest policy issues within the membership.

Subsequent to changes made to the *Foresters Act* in 2003, the association now has a mandate to advocate on behalf of forest stewardship. Promotion of the forestry profession and good forest stewardship are also permitted.

Questions raised by members at the 56th ABCFP Forestry Conference & Annual Meeting in February 2004 and a series of articles published in *Forum* magazine ("Raising Our Profile," March/April 2004) prompted renewed interest from the membership on the issue of external communication and what the association was doing about it. Council listened.

At its March 2004 meeting, the ABCFP council approved the formation of a task force to recommend how the association's external communications might be improved. Following the development of terms of reference (see Appendix I), the external communications task force met for the first time in July 2004. Subsequent meetings were held over the next few months to prepare a report for presentation to council in November 2004. This report addresses the questions posed in the terms of reference and contains the task force's recommendations.

## 2 Background

It is essential to understand the current regulatory and policy environment in which the association operates before making any recommendations regarding external communications.

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Until recently, the association has not had a mandate for advocacy. This lack of a mandate hampered efforts. Subsequent to changes made to the *Foresters Act* in 2003, the association now has a mandate to advocate for principles of stewardship of forests, forest lands, forest resources and forest ecosystems (Section 4). Promotion of the forestry profession and promotion of good forest stewardship are also permitted (Section 11).

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Consistent with the ABCFP's mandate and in consideration of the current context in which the association and its members operate, the ABCFP council adopted the following vision statement to guide the association's actions (from the *2004-2006 Strategic Plan*, which is currently in the process of being updated):

*The ABCFP is committed to protecting the public interest in the practice of professional forestry and to advancing the stewardship of BC's forests. Its members are recognized locally, nationally and internationally as trusted sources of information and expertise regarding the sustainable management of forest resources and for whom the public interest is paramount.*

*It has a broad and inclusive membership reflecting a variety of educational and experiential backgrounds encompassing the full scope of forest resources management. It is a dynamic, financially solvent organization which operates to high standards of governance and enjoys an informed and engaged membership.*

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The ABCFP strategic plan contains goals, objectives and strategies to guide the association's activities over a three to five-year period. A number of these items are directly or indirectly related to external communications. They fall within the following strategic areas:

- Forest Resources Stewardship
- Government Relations
- Employer Relations
- Inter-Profession Relations
- Public Relations
- Communications
- Membership Growth

## 2' 4 Code of Ethics

The ABCFP Code of Ethics (Bylaw 11) imposes various obligations on members, including three which are relevant to a discussion of external communications:

*To advocate and practice good stewardship of forest land based on sound ecological principles to sustain its ability to provide those values that have been assigned by society. (Bylaw 11.3.1)*

*To work to improve the practices and policies affecting the stewardship of forest land. (Bylaw 11.3.5)*

*To work to extend public knowledge of forestry, and to promote truthful and accurate statements on forestry matters. (Bylaw 11.3.6)*

The ABCFP membership is more than 4,000 strong and the association has a long history of volunteer involvement. This culture bodes well for future member involvement in external communications activities.

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In July 1998, council adopted an advocacy policy in recognition of the membership's interest in a wide range of forest policy issues and their desire that the association play a proactive role relative to those issues. In doing so, council accepted that the same obligations which members have imposed upon themselves in the Code of Ethics (Bylaw 11, see above) also apply to the work of the association.

The policy states that council's decisions regarding advocacy will be taken on a case-by-case basis giving due consideration to the diversity of opinion within the membership, the association's legislated mandate and its limited resources. The policy further states that council will only advocate in the public interest and will not advocate if it believes doing so will create undue divisions within the membership.

Finally, the policy spells out that council will:

- Establish, maintain and provide ongoing support for an effective community level network of informed, motivated and empowered members to advocate within their community on professional and forest stewardship issues;
- Promote and facilitate member involvement in the formulation and review of forest policy at all levels;
- Undertake and promote activities which inform the public debate surrounding key forest policy issues.
- Play a leadership role in relation to key forest stewardship issues by facilitating the search for solutions that are socially acceptable, environmentally sustainable and economically viable.

The plan outlined in the advocacy policy remains sound but finding the will and the time to implement it continues to be a struggle. In addition, the policy needs a minor modification so that the specific role of council is more in line with the association's new policy governance model. Under this model, it is intended that council not involve itself in the day-to-day business of the association, but focus instead on strategic direction and the performance of the association relative to its policies.

## 2' 6 Stewardship Advisory Committee

The stewardship advisory committee helps fulfill the association's mandate and strategic plan goals and objectives in the area of forest stewardship. When considering whether or not to take action on an issue, the committee is guided by a protocol which includes the following six steps:

1. Determine if the issue: (a) fits within the association's advocacy policy; and (b) has forest stewardship or professional practice/regulatory implications. Rank the importance of the issue.
2. Determine if the association should respond to the forest stewardship issue. Why or why not? What are the appropriate reasons?
3. Establish what other action(s), if any, the association has already taken and determine if more information is needed before proceeding.
4. Establish what approaches the association could take and who will take action.
5. Develop an action and communications plan for the issue.
6. Monitor the implementation of the response(s) and the effectiveness of the action in order to improve current and future responses.

In recent years, the committee has considered the following issues: species at risk, the working forest and the Filmon Report on the 2003 fire season. Currently the committee is reviewing fire management issues in BC.

### 51: Stewardship Advisory Committee

The Professional Foresters' Network is intended to be a broad base of forest professionals who work at local and regional levels to provide effective communication, education and liaison on forestry issues to a wide variety of audiences, including public, schools (teachers, councillors, students), government, politicians, media, other organizations and forest professionals.

PFNs are currently located in approximately 20 communities around BC but few are very active. Revitalization of the network is needed, but has received little attention in recent years due to other, higher priorities.

### 51: Stewardship Advisory Committee

When ForesTrust was originally conceived in the mid-1980s, it had two primary purposes: (1) scholarship funding; and (2) public education funding. In the early years, it relied primarily on voluntary contributions. Considerable progress was made on the first mandate but the same could not be said with respect to the second mandate. In 1996, ForesTrust was wound down. Two years later, ForesTrust was revitalized and restructured to focus strictly on scholarship funding. The trust document, however, still includes the two purposes. Today, most contributions to ForesTrust come from two sources: (1) AGM surpluses; and (2) commissions on membership services.

## 2' 9 The Canadian Institute of Forestry

The Canadian Institute of Forestry (CIF) has been the national voice of forest practitioners since 1908. Their mission is to advance the stewardship of Canada's forest resources, provide national leadership in forestry, promote competence among forestry professionals, and foster public awareness of Canadian and international forestry issues.

The organization's membership includes foresters, forest technicians and technologists, educators, scientists and others with a professional interest in forestry. They work in government, industry, research, education and consulting and represent one of the largest professional voices for forestry in Canada.

CIF's primary focus for the coming year is to improve their communications and outreach. They have traditionally been a pretty quiet group but realize how critical communications are, especially around environmental and forestry issues.

The ABCFP negotiated a deal with the CIF to enable ABCFP members to pay their CIF dues at a generous discount when they pay their ABCFP membership dues. Sadly, this incentive has had limited success. In recent years, only about 190 individuals have made use of this option.

More than a decade ago, a report was prepared by some past president's of the association regarding our relationship with the CIF. The report recommended that the association should focus on regulating the profession in BC (its core mandate) and the CIF should be responsible for advocacy. However, this does not take into consideration the provincial nature of forest policy and professional regulation. Here in BC, we cannot depend on the CIF to be the voice of the BC forestry profession.

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Since 1999, the association has conducted annual polling to determine the level of public awareness of and attitudes toward the profession and the state of forestry in BC. The following selected results from the 2004 polling are relevant to this report:

- In 2004, less than half the BC residents polled indicated satisfaction with the quality of forest resources management in the province. (Compare this to a satisfaction rating of 80 per cent among ABCFP members.)
- Resource professionals (including foresters, forest technologists, biologists, engineers, geoscientists and agrologists) are perceived to be the most credible sources when it comes to information regarding BC's forest resources. Professional foresters (27%) followed by professional biologists (21%) are the most trusted resource professionals. Those satisfied with forestry management are more likely to trust professional foresters, while those who are dissatisfied have greater confidence in professional biologists.
- Public awareness of RPFs sits at 83% and of RFTs sits at 55%. While these numbers seem high, the vast majority of respondents indicated that they were only somewhat aware of the two designations. The numbers indicating a high level of awareness are low, although awareness of the two designations is generally higher outside the Vancouver area.

- BC residents say it is important to restrict the practice of forestry to RPFs and RFTs (84%). Those satisfied with the quality of forestry resources management are more apt to feel it is important to restrict the practice to the two groups (92%) than those who are dissatisfied (78%).
- BC residents agree that RPFs and RFTs are technically competent (80%), ethical in the forest resource management decision they make (72%), accountable (66%) and are doing a good job of managing BC's forest resources (63%).

These results have been fairly consistent over the years. They appear to indicate that higher levels of awareness of the profession will have spin-off effects, such as improving public perceptions about the profession and increasing the public's respect.

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Over the years, some members have questioned whether the association lacks the will to raise the profile of the profession or get involved in public education, advocacy and policy leadership.

At one end of the spectrum are members who want the association to be actively involved in these areas. At the other end of the spectrum are members who do not want the association to do anything of the sort because the views of the membership are too diverse. Members who disagree with an association position cannot simply resign from the ABCFP in protest, because they must be a member if they wish to continue to practice professional forestry in BC.

This constraint, coupled with members' narrow rejection of a fee increase ballot in September 2001 aimed at generating the revenue required to initiate new programs have hampered the association's ability to make much progress in the external communications area. While the majority of members indicated they wanted the association to do more, they were unwilling to deliver the financial resources necessary to do so. This wasn't always the case. In November 1990, members voted in favour of a \$100 fee increase and in late 1993, they voted in favour of a \$60 fee increase implemented over a two-year period (after two failed fee ballot attempts). These two increases were deemed necessary to implement the association's five-year strategic plan, which included major external communications elements.

Over an 18-month period beginning in 2000, the Next Plateau Initiative was carried out to determine the association's direction for the following five years and the extent of resources available to pursue new directions. An unprecedented level of member consultation ensued to gather input. The results showed that members wanted the association to move forward on both the regulatory and advocacy fronts, but the desire was stronger for movement on the advocacy side. Members wanted the association to be more active in advocacy, policy leadership and public education. Members expressed a preference for non-positional, proactive advocacy aimed at informing the public about the profession and about issues. Despite indication that there was considerable support for a fee increase if it was used primarily for advocacy activities, when the results of the Next Plateau fee ballot were tallied, it narrowly failed to achieve the required two-thirds majority.

More recently, results from the 2004 Membership Survey indicate that most members (of those expressing an opinion) want the association to take more active roles in advocating for forest policies that improve forest stewardship (87%) and educating the public about good forest stewardship (87%). Members have mixed views on the effectiveness of the association's relations with employer groups, other resource

professions, government, interest groups and the media and there were large numbers of members who were not aware of many of the association's activities in these areas. This begs the question of whether the association is effectively communicating its progress in these areas with members. Members are most concerned with the association's current level of activity in the following areas: visibility in the media; public knowledge and understanding of the forestry profession; public regard for and trust in the profession; and public knowledge and understanding of forest policy. On a more positive note, there were fewer concerns regarding the association's effectiveness relating to: advocacy regarding professional matters; advocacy regarding forest stewardship; and influencing public policy related to roles, rights and responsibilities of forest professionals. Also of note, 90% support the association speaking on behalf of forest professionals on issues of forest management and forest stewardship and 77% believe council should be empowered to take positions on forest policy issues on behalf of the membership.

### 3 Future Vision for ABCFP External Communications

The task force has identified the following desired future state of the association relative to external communications:

*The association and its members are recognized and respected as the most credible and trusted source of information and expertise on the sustainable management of British Columbia's forest resources. Their broad and inclusive membership produces a balance of professional opinion that results in considerable influence on the direction of forest policy in British Columbia, Canada and around the world.*

*The association provides strong leadership to government, the forest sector and the public. It speaks with a clear voice and is consistently focussed on protecting the public interest in the practice of professional forestry and advancing good forest stewardship.*

*The members of the association promote the profession, advocate for good stewardship of forest resources, improve public knowledge of the profession and vigilantly guard the public interest. They are active, engaged, empowered and supported in their efforts to proudly speak out and provide guidance on behalf of the profession.*

## 4 Objectives of External Communication

For the ABCFP, there are three key objectives of external communication:

- To promote the forestry profession.
- To advocate for principles of stewardship of forests, forest lands, forest resources and forest ecosystems.
- To increase and improve public knowledge of forest management.

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This entails raising awareness of the forestry profession among the public and the forest sector and, more generally, promoting the concept of self-regulating professions as adding good value for society.

It includes communicating the requirements of the *Foresters Act* and ensuring that organizations employ registered professionals to perform work that falls within the definition of professional forestry. It includes outlining the benefits realized by the public from ensuring that registered professionals are in place to safeguard the public interest in forest resources. Finally, it also includes working to change the system so the potential of the profession is utilized to the benefit of society.

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This entails taking positions on issues of critical importance to the practice of professional forestry, and communicating those positions to the general public, government and the forest sector. Much the same as each member must demonstrate their independence from the pressures of employment, so must the association demonstrate its independence from the pressures of government, the forest sector and special interest groups. The association must stay true to its duty of protecting the public interest.

This is perhaps the most important objective of the three in terms of building trust and respect. It is also the hardest to achieve primarily because of the diverse nature of the membership. Positions must be well balanced and reasonable, but not watered down for commonality to the point where they are meaningless. Along the same vein, forestry problems can be very complex making easy (and generally accepted) answers hard to come by.

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This entails improving public knowledge of forest resource management so better public policy choices can be made. This is an area where there should be a great deal of continuity between the efforts of individual members and those of the association. The key interest is not so much in publishing and promoting positions as it is in providing the fundamental knowledge of forest management principles and outlining, in a positive way, the pros and cons of the various policy choices.

With a more educated public, the association can count on a greater degree of support when it finds that it is necessary to take a justified, but unpopular position on key forest management issues. This objective is critical to the association's success in being an advocate for sustainable forest resource management.

## 5 Benefits and Challenges

Premier Gordon Campbell, in an address to the Truck Loggers Convention on January 16, 2004, challenged professional foresters to take responsibility for environmental stewardship and sustainability in forest resource development. The public expects to hear from forest professionals on these matters.

The forestry profession needs to be heard. There are obvious benefits to be realized from promoting the profession, getting more involved in the advocacy arena and increasing public knowledge about forest management. There are also challenges. Success will come as long as we are aware of these challenges and manage them to our advantage.

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### 1. Benefits to the Public Interest

- Make the public more aware of what forest professionals do.
- Provide the association a strong voice to advocate on behalf of good forest stewardship. (This is in the public interest.)
- Provide a vehicle to interact with the public through media dialogue.
- Educate the public about good forest stewardship and forest management.
- Provide the public with a credible, trusted source of information about forest management.

### 2. Benefits to the Association/Profession

- Raise the association's profile.
- Increase the association's credibility.
- Provide the association a strong voice to advocate on behalf of good forest stewardship. (This is in the profession's interest.)
- Provide the support, structure and strategy to do an adequate job of communicating.
- Open lines of communication and improve relations with key stakeholders.
- Draw enthusiastic and dedicated people into the profession.
- Increase pride in the profession.

### 3. Benefits to the Forest Professional (Individual Members)

- Raise the profession's profile.
- Put "honourable" back into the profession ("feel good" factor).
- Encourage and motivate forest professionals to be more involved.
- Increase the credibility of individual forest professionals.
- Increase pride in the profession.
- Provide support for the independence of members.

## 5' 2 Challenges

### 1. Unfriendly Fire

- External communication activities, particularly in the area of advocacy, can attract “unfriendly fire” from interest groups who disagree with the association’s position.
- The association does not have deep pockets to fall back on if targeted by well-funded interest groups.

### 2. Credibility

- Need to make sure that a position taken by the association is consistent with what is happening on the ground. Follow through.
- Others may question the profession’s ability and willingness to “walk the talk.”

### 3. Competing Priorities

- Regulation of the profession is the core function of the association’s mandate and takes priority. However, external communication is necessary to effectively fulfil this mandate.

### 4. Inability to Respond Quickly

- The complexity of many forestry problems means there are often no easy and generally-accepted answers.
- The association cannot always respond to issues quickly. Some issues go to a committee for review and it can sometimes take months to develop a position.
- By the time the association is prepared to make a statement on an issue, it is likely no longer newsworthy. Once something is no longer newsworthy, how can we make our positions known?

### 5. Diversity of Opinion within the Membership

- ABCFP membership is broad and there is no consensus on many issues.
- Although council is permitted to take positions on issues of forest stewardship on behalf of the membership, it would be unwise to do so without seeking member input.
- Due to the right-to-practice nature of the forestry profession, members who disagree with positions taken by the ABCFP cannot “opt out” of membership if they practice professional forestry in BC. This has been one of the long-standing arguments for not getting more involved in the advocacy arena.

### 6. Lack of Commitment

- In recent years, members have been reluctant to approve requests for fee increases to fund advocacy activities.

## 7. Scarcity of Resources

- External communication activities can be a bottomless pit and eat up a lot of resources (i.e. cost, staff workload, volunteers' time).
- The association may lack the appropriate competencies and expertise. Do we have the competencies in-house? Can volunteers provide this? Or do we need outside expertise?
- If the association decides to get more involved in advocacy, public education and public awareness activities, the profession will become better known. This would increase external demands placed upon staff and we would be obligated to find time to respond and deal with issues management at the expense of other priorities. Be careful what you wish for.
- Are there other options for funding external communication activities other than from general revenue or requiring a fee increase?

## 8. Potential Liability

- There is always a potential for external communication activities to backfire on the association, council and the membership.
- If this were to happen, the profession and/or public trust in the profession could be seriously undermined.

## 6 8 Discussion

In its deliberations, the task force explored the potential directions the association could take in pursuing increased external communications within the bounds of the three main objectives: (1) promotion of the profession; (2) advocacy; and (3) public education. It developed a number of tools that could be used by association members and staff in external communication efforts. These tools are found in the *External Communications Workbook*, attached to this report. The concept of the workbook is that it be a tool for the use of staff and committee members involved in external communications, after council has endorsed a general policy direction on the subject of external communications. Included in these tools are:

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A comprehensive set of external communication methods, an inventory of current practices and potential future tactics.

### 915 Hiihfwlyh Frppxqlfdwlrq Wlsv

A simple list of good ideas to guide external communications.

### 916 Prghov iru Rujdql dwlrq

A table that lays out the four key organizational models one could enlist to “get the message out.”

### 917 Irfxv Duhdv dqg Vwudwhjlvh

An exercise undertaken to explore the key target audiences of communication, the priorities and the strategies that should be enlisted to communicate key messages to the key target audiences.

### 918 Shulrglf Hohfwlrq Fdpsdljq Vwudwhj

A specific strategy pointing to the upcoming provincial election campaign, but one that could easily be adopted for any election campaign.

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This piece already existed in ABCFP policy but requires some adjustment to reflect the new governance model of the association. It lays out a framework for the association to develop positions on advocacy issues.

The task force determined that the report for council should not focus on strategy related planning, but rather on the general direction the association should follow and the consequent costs.

The issue of option development and recommendation presentation was also a key discussion point for the task force. After consideration of the new governance model and making a number of attempts at option development, the task force concluded that a set of options on various communication strategy frameworks would not be consistent with the governance model, and would not be as meaningful as a single, well thought out, policy framework.

The task force also landed on the recommendation of a policy direction that builds a program over time, as resources become available to support the program. It is assumed that the membership will need to experience some form of success in the area of advocacy, for example, before it is willing to either increase fees or divert resources to support it.

## 7 Recommendation

After consideration of the background material, the future vision, the objectives, the benefits and the challenges of external communication, the task force found that the association's current external communication strategy is not adequate to meet the responsibilities of the association under the *Foresters Act* or the expectations of most members or the public.

If the vision in this report is accepted, we must find a route to attain the vision. It is unrealistic to expect the association could achieve such a vision in the short term. It will take some time to build strategies, raise resources and develop a mature external communications program.

In terms of the relative priority of the three objectives, the task force recommends that the top priority go to the advocacy objective. This objective provides the strongest response to the concerns of members and the public and speaks most directly to the goals of recognition, respect and influence. The other two objectives of promotion of the profession and public education will be partially met through the advocacy objective actions, and will be built upon as the association's strategies develop. The task force recommends that the association maintain its current efforts in the areas of promotion of the profession and public education, but at the same time provide a new focus for external communications on the advocacy objective.

Following are phases that will, over time, develop an effective and robust external communications program for the association. Each phase is described in terms of a model, resources required and results expected.

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**Timeframe:** over the next year.

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**Model:** centralized development and response.

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**Objective:** to increase the association's advocacy actions with a focus on government policy changes and emerging forest management issues.

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**Resources:** current funding levels, but will require small reallocations of staff time, and either reassignment of an existing committee or establishment of a new committee.

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**Results:** A slight increase in awareness of the association and the perceived independence of the association will result from this new focus on advocacy. While there will not be any highly resourced initiatives, the association will begin to speak out for improved forest policy, for better forest stewardship, and these efforts will be noted by those connected with the forest sector. The association will be noticed.

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See Section 8 (Short Term Action Recommended in Phase 1) for some specific activities suggested for this phase.

## 7' 2 Phase 2

**Timeframe:** within the next five years

**Model:** centralized development and some coordination of membership delivery.

**Objective:** to take significant action on advocacy and a smaller degree of activity on promoting the profession and public education.

**Resources:** an increase in resources of 0.5 person years and \$25,000-\$50,000 in annual project funding (or an equivalent combination).

**Results:** The association will become recognized and respected for its efforts in affecting forest policy and forest stewardship based on the public interest. There will be some significant initiatives and within a well developed program of communications efforts. Recognition will go beyond those connected to the forest sector and into the general population. Respect for the association will be on the rise.

## :16 Skdvh 6

**Timeframe:** five years and beyond.

**Model:** centralized development, coordination and support of membership participation.

**Objective:** to meet the future vision of external communication.

**Resources:** one or more person years and a significant program budget (\$50,000-\$100,000).

**Results:** In this term, the association is rapidly moving toward its vision for external communications. The public, the media, government and industry leaders view the association as a credible and well-balanced voice on issues related to forest management. Surveys of the public and members indicate that the association has gained significant recognition, respect and influence over the previous number of years of program development.

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The most pressing challenge facing the association is a lack of resources to undertake additional external communications activities. The task force identified a number of possible options for overcoming this obstacle. These include:

- reallocating existing resources
- freeing up existing resources by finding more efficient ways of operating
- providing members with tools and resources and letting them “run with the ball”
- working more closely with other existing organizations; finding synergies
- seeking outside funding
- expanding the membership base
- seeking a fee increase or special levy from the membership
- voluntary contributions

## 8 Short Term Action Recommended in Phase 1

This section is presented for demonstration purposes only. It is targeted more to staff and committee members as it deals with specific strategies on the advocacy front. However, the task force felt it would be enlightening for council to consider the types of activity that might take place within Phase 1, should it decide to approve the recommendation.

Taken in combination, the strategies would exceed the bounds of Phase 1 resources. It is recommended that staff build upon this list and choose a subset of strategies that are achievable.

### Remhfwlyhv

- to advocate for the principles of stewardship of forests, forest lands, forest resources and forest ecosystems
- to affect forest policy and public opinion
- to support members who are advocating these principles

### Wdujhvw ri Frppxqlfdwlrq

- provincial government policy makers and politicians
- general public
- forest sector management

Strategies	Cost
1. Update advocacy policy to provide the executive director with authority to approve advocacy communications and obtain council approval.	Minor staff time.
2. Monitor forest policy.	Moderate staff time or manage through volunteer efforts.
3. Lobby MOF executive to make changes to forest policy consistent with the principles of stewardship of forests, forest lands, forest resources and forest ecosystems. Letters, meetings, etc.	Within current communications framework, therefore minor cost associated with policy research.
4. Provide key messages on forest policy to candidates for the upcoming provincial election (May 2005).	Committee work and moderate staff time.
5. Provide key messages to candidates for the upcoming civic elections (November 2005).	Committee work and moderate staff time.
6. Produce at least two news releases annually on timely forest management topics (one proactive; one reactive).	Within current communication framework.
7. Produce at least one opinion editorial annually on forest policy issues in order to affect government policy and inform the public about forest policy evolution.	Minor staff time or enlist volunteer efforts.

Strategies	Cost
8. PFN chairs supported and empowered to produce a PFN external communications handbook.	Committee work and minor staff time.
9. Undertake an inventory and evaluation of existing association external communications activities to determine their effectiveness.	Committee work and moderate staff time.
10. Begin planning and preparation in anticipation of moving into Phase 2.	Committee work and moderate staff time.
11. Conduct ongoing media monitoring.	Minor staff time. \$100 per month.

## 9 Additional Recommendations

The following are recommendations to council that are consequential to the review of current external communications efforts completed by the task force and the direction necessary to meet the future vision of external communications.

1. The association should inform the membership of its direction on external communication to demonstrate its reaction to the membership and public surveys.
2. The association should consider establishing an external communications award to recognize volunteers and/or specific external communication activities (i.e. promoting the profession, advocacy and/or public education).
3. The broad objectives of external communications should be incorporated into the next iteration of the strategic plan.
4. Staff should seek ways to involve members in external communication activities.
5. Update the advocacy policy to meet the association's requirements under the new governance model.
6. Have the stewardship advisory committee review this report to determine how external communications relates to its mandate.
7. Name "PFN" should be changed to be inclusive of forest technologists and be something that resonates with the public/media.
8. The PFN terms of reference are outdated and should be revised.
9. The ABCFP should do more to better utilize the PFNs and keep them active (i.e. encouragement, support, tools, resources, budget).
10. The relationship between the ABCFP and the CIF should be strengthened.
11. Contribute a regular ABCFP update to the CIF *Forestry Chronicle*.
12. Encourage ABCFP members to also join the CIF.
13. Additional measuring (before/after) required to determine if our efforts have raised public awareness.
14. Additional measuring (before/after) required to determine if members perceive that our efforts have raised public awareness.
15. Conduct regular media monitoring to be aware of emerging issues and determine the effectiveness of the association's and members' external communications activities.

## 10 Conclusion

Recognition, respect and influence. Our profession is not performing well in these areas today. To be an advocate, to promote the profession and to educate the public—these are the actions essential to enable the association to fulfil its mandate under the *Foresters Act*. Ineffective external communications will seriously undermine the association’s efforts, reduce its influence, hamper efforts to attract new people into the profession and possibly lead the public or the government to question the necessity of a regulated forestry profession.

Recent changes to provincial forestry legislation have given the resource professions a more autonomous role in managing and caring for British Columbia’s forest resources. Enormous forest management challenges—such as the millions of hectares of pine trees killed by the mountain pine bark beetle, climate change and the legacy of past forest fuel management—combine with the current shift in policy to make this an era of challenge in forest management without comparison. As a result, the forestry profession will come under the microscope of public opinion more so than ever before. Thus, the importance of open and effective communication with external stakeholders has never been greater.

The forestry profession needs to be heard. We cannot afford to be complacent. There are obvious benefits to be realized from promoting the profession, getting more involved in the advocacy arena and increasing public knowledge about forest management. There are serious consequences if we remain silent. Now is the time for the profession to speak up. We need to show the people of British Columbia that we take our role as stewards of BC’s forest resources and our duty to protect and serve the public interest seriously. It is part of what being a profession is all about.

Appendix I: External Communications Task Force Terms of Reference

# Terms of Reference



## ABCFP External Communications Task Force

Date Approved: June 24, 2004

### Preamble

At the March 2004 council meeting, the ABCFP council approved the establishment of a task force to bring forward recommendations on how the association's external communications might be improved.

There have been many efforts in the past by members and councillors to organize a concerted external communication vehicle within the association. These efforts have had limited effect for a number of reasons, including the following: the lack of a mandate for advocacy; the scarcity of resources and the demands of other priorities; a wide spectrum of viewpoints on forest policy issues within the membership; potential liability to the association.

The new *Foresters Act* outlines the duties and objects of the association in Section 4. This section states in part:

(2) *The objects of the association are the following:*

(b) *to advocate for and uphold principles of stewardship of forests, forest lands, forest resources and forest ecosystems;*

Section 11(1)(k) of the *Foresters Act* also permits the promotion of the profession.

With the change in the *Foresters Act*, the association now has a mandate to advocate for principles of stewardship of forests, forest lands, forest resources and forest ecosystems.

Therefore, the following terms of reference will start off the process of addressing this new direction for the association.

### Purpose

The purpose of the External Communications Task Force is to bring forward to council a report recommending an external communications strategy for the ABCFP. The report may include options. The report should address the following questions:

- What are the appropriate purposes of external communication by the ABCFP?
- Is the association's current external communications effort adequate or not? If not, to what extent should it increase and how should the impact on other association priorities be addressed?
- What are the benefits and pitfalls of enhancing the association's external communications?
- What would be the process and criteria for identifying and establishing association positions on topics of interest?
- What are the best models for the organization of an external communication vehicle(s)?
- Who is/are the target audience(s) of external communications?

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- What are the potential methods of external communication and which would be most effective? Should communications be proactive, or reactive, or both? What are the efficacy considerations for each?
- What are the implications of the various options in terms of cost and staff workload?
- What is the recommended action plan for implementation

The executive director and the director communications may jointly add to this list of questions at any time during the life of the External Communications Task Force.

## **Relationships & Accountability**

In authorizing the establishment of the External Communications Task Force, council empowered the executive director, working with the director communications, to define the terms of reference and appoint task force members. The task force shall report to council through the executive director and the director communications. The executive director and the director communications may jointly dismiss any or all External Communications Task Force members and may terminate the mandate of the External Communications Task Force at any time.

## **Composition & Term**

The External Communications Task Force shall be comprised of:

- At least one member of the ABCFP council, one of whom shall be the director communications;
- At least 5 members of the association.

The task force shall be chaired by a member of the ABCFP council.

Other individuals may attend External Communications Task Force meetings at the joint discretion of the executive director and the chair.

All appointments terminate when the executive director and the director communications jointly determine that the task is completed. The External Communications Task Force's task is expected to be complete by the end of 2004.

## **Report Timing & Approval**

The External Communications Task Force may table a preliminary report at council's September 2004 meeting and shall table its final report at council's November 2004 meeting. Council shall have absolute discretion to decide the extent to which the External Communications Task Force's recommendations are adopted by the ABCFP.

## **Meetings, Decision-making & Support**

Meetings shall be at the call of the chair but given the nature of the task, will likely occur at least monthly. To the extent feasible, meetings shall be conducted by conference call or other electronic means.

It is expected that decision-making will be consensual. In the event consensus is not achieved, the position of the minority shall be noted in the report. The chair may put a question to council for interim guidance if necessary.

Staff support shall be provided by the executive director with the support of other staff as determined by the executive director. Staff may attend External Communications Task Force meetings and may actively participate in External Communications Task Force discussions but may not vote.

## **Communications & Confidentiality**

Members of the External Communications Task Force may communicate and consult with their constituencies regarding the matters being considered by the External Communications Task Force but must do so in a constructive, transparent, good faith manner that does not undermine its deliberations. The External Communications Task Force as a whole may not undertake any public communications except through the chair and only when authorized to do so by the executive director.

## **Budget & Expenses**

Sufficient funding shall be provided by the ABCFP to cover the reasonable meeting expenses of the External Communications Task Force. It is not anticipated that external support or the assistance of consultants will be required.



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