New Forest Act Framework: Executive Summary

The New Forest Act is a proposed legislative framework to address long-term instability in British Columbia's forest sector by aligning forest management with the ecological limits of the land base and the economic needs of communities.

Purpose

The framework is designed to stabilize timber supply, restore watershed function, and support durable regional economies by shifting from volume-based management toward outcomes-based management grounded in ecological performance.

Forests are treated as critical public infrastructure—supporting water security, slope stability, biodiversity, and long-term fibre supply.

Context

BC's forest sector is experiencing increasing instability:

- Declining timber quality and accessibility
- Rising harvesting and transportation costs
- Reduced operable land base due to ecological and physical constraints
- Increasing impacts from wildfire, drought, and hydrological disruption

These conditions are not temporary. They reflect structural limits within the current management framework, which relies on projected volume targets that are increasingly difficult to achieve in practice.

Core Approach

The New Forest Act restructures forest management around a spatial and operational framework: **Protect – Restore – Harvest (PRH)**.

Protect: Primary forests and critical watershed areas are maintained to preserve ecological function, hydrological stability, and long-term system resilience.

Restore: Previously logged and degraded areas are managed for recovery of forest structure, hydrology, and ecological function, improving future productivity and reducing risk.

Harvest: Timber harvesting continues on previously disturbed lands using selection-based systems, continuous cover, and retention approaches—only where ecological thresholds allow.

Timber Supply Stability

The framework is designed to stabilize long-term timber supply by aligning harvest levels with verified ecological growth and site conditions, rather than forecasted volume targets based on increasingly constrained land base assumptions. This reduces the risk of future supply shortfalls, mill closures, and cyclical economic disruption.

Governance and Implementation

The framework introduces a governance model that integrates ecological, economic, and regional considerations:

- Community-based decision-making through Community Forest Boards
- Independent oversight and reporting through a Forester General
- Integration of scientific and Indigenous knowledge at the planning level
- Operational monitoring through local and regional structures

At the provincial level, legislation would consolidate and replace the current framework to align management with long-term outcomes.

Transition

The transition is designed to occur over a 1–5 year period:

- Existing harvesting rights conclude at renewal
- No requirement for tenure buy-backs
- Workforce transition supported through expansion of restoration, planning, monitoring, and value-added sectors

This approach enables a phased shift while maintaining operational continuity.

Economic Implications

The framework supports a shift from high-volume dependency toward:

- More stable, lower-variance timber supply
- Increased value per cubic metre
- Expanded employment in restoration, monitoring, and value-added processing
- Regional log markets that improve allocation efficiency and local economic benefit

Summary

The New Forest Act outlines one approach to addressing long-term structural challenges in BC's forest sector.

It focuses on aligning management with ecological limits, improving the reliability of timber supply, and supporting more stable regional economies.

Download the full proposal and backgrounder at: newforestact.ca
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