

**Mayor Gerry Furney**  
**Town of Port McNeill**  
P.O. Box 728  
Port McNeill, B.C. V0N 2R0



*Town Office: (250) 956-3111*  
*Fax: (250) 956-4300*  
*Residence: (250) 956-2446*  
*Cell: (250) 230-1911*

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0530-01

March 22, 2012

Prime Minister Stephen Harper  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa Ontario K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

Earlier this year we wrote to you asking that "charitable" status be removed from the "anything but charitable" foreign-funded organizations that continue their assault on the resource industries of British Columbia.

Enclosed is a current sample of their effort to increase the "protected" area of the west coast from 50% to 70%. Such a suggestion shows no appreciation or respect for the economic drivers of our province.

These organizations are the antithesis of "charitable" in their actions and their claim to be "charitable" makes a mockery of the whole concept.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'G. J. Furney'.

Gerry Furney  
Mayor

CC: Honourable John Duncan

# Half is not enough for the Great Bear Rainforest

BY VALERIE LANGER, EDUARDO SOUSA AND JENS WIETING, SPECIAL TO THE SUN FEBRUARY 29, 2012



A Grizzly Bear catches a salmon in the Great Bear Rainforest.

Photograph by: Handout, Larry Travi

Six years ago an amazing thing happened. Environmental organizations and the forestry industry, former foes in the fight over the future of the Great Bear Rainforest, stood alongside first nations and the provincial government in front of the cameras of the world and made a promise. They said, "We are going to work together to protect one of the last forests of its kind and improve the well-being of communities within it."

That promise was globally noteworthy for several reasons. The first and most obvious is that the Great Bear Rainforest, home of the rare Spirit Bear, encompasses one of the largest areas of intact coastal temperate rainforest left on the planet. With its verdant river valleys and old-growth cedars, this rainforest isn't just beautiful; it provides a home to endangered animals, resources that fuel our economy and tools for fighting climate change.

The fact that the February 2006 commitment was a shared effort between differing and at times conflicting interests is also an important part of the story. The Great Bear Rainforest Agreements were a precedent-setting collaboration between several environmental organizations, five major forestry companies, the province of B.C. and more than 20 first nations to model solutions for a place larger

than Switzerland. Equally significant is that these first nations are now involved in resource decision-making over their traditional lands through a government-to-government process.

Overall, the agreements amounted to an ambitious and much-celebrated plan that's yielded some notable success. Sustainable economic development is starting to take root in communities within the Great Bear Rainforest, which is now better protected from logging than it was before. But these efforts have also been beset by delays that call into question whether the full vision of the agreements will be realized in time to safeguard the forest as we know it.

Scientists who developed the Handbook for Ecosystem-Based Management – the management regime that seeks to achieve healthy ecosystems and healthy human communities in the Great Bear Rainforest – are clear that we need to conserve 70 per cent of the natural levels of old-growth forest in order to keep the whole ecosystem functioning properly. Currently, only 50 per cent of the forest is off-limits to logging. And while that's an achievement, it's still insufficient. Too much habitat is being logged to maintain the health of the forest and the species that depend on it. In other words, protecting half of the Great Bear Rainforest is not enough to live up to the vision that was promised to the world in 2006.

There have also been advancements for human well-being in first nations communities, particularly through the \$120-million Coast Opportunities Fund. But while local businesses and resource management departments are starting to take root, reform of forestry tenures and tourism licensing and region-wide capacity building initiatives are incomplete. As on the conservation side, the province has yet to create the conditions that will allow coastal communities and the forestry sector to thrive without undermining the environment.

The good news is that full success is close and achievable. In collaboration with environmental organizations, logging companies are seriously examining how to adapt their businesses to operate within the bounds set out by science. Within the year, it's possible for first nations and the province to complete agreements on economic initiatives that can further empower these communities while also conserving a healthy forest.

The final ingredient needed is the will to do all of this by March 2013. With the provincial election cycle already looming over decision-makers in Victoria, British Columbians deserve to know that the fate of the Great Bear Rainforest won't be punted to another administration. The message from ForestEthics, Greenpeace and Sierra Club BC to elected officials is that the opportunity to finish the job we started in 2006 is now. Otherwise, it could be never.

*Valerie Langer is a senior campaigner at ForestEthics; Eduardo Sousa is a senior forests campaigner at Greenpeace Canada; and Jens Wieting is a coastal forest campaigner at Sierra Club BC.*

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