

Report to the Forest Practices Board

**Communication, Mandate Capacity & Execution
and Board's Future Focus**

Executive Summary

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The Forest Practices Board initiated this review of its communications, capacity & execution of its mandate, and future focus, to both compare it to a similar 2006 survey and prepare for a strategic planning session in September 2010. The terms of reference included:

- Advise on the content of survey questions to be administered by telephone.
- Conduct a telephone survey of up to 24 key stakeholder representatives.
- Compile and analyze survey results.
- Provide a report summarizing the survey results and describing the key findings and issues arising from the survey.

This report provides the telephone survey results and analysis within the areas of communications, mandate and future focus for the Board.

Communications (Section 2)

Overall comparisons indicate a predominantly status quo between 2006 and 2010 for perceptions of usefulness of the Board's communications tools -- Special reports, Complaint reports Audit reports, Annual reports, Bulletins and Newsletter. On average, annual reports and newsletters were the two tools ranked below 3 (out of 5) and warrant an examination in terms of usefulness to audiences in general.

The Board continues to enjoy a healthy level of trust with key stakeholders, particularly in government. Over 90% of respondents indicated that report information from the FPB was clear and easy to understand, compared to the 70% rating for this same question in 2006.

The highest information needs expressed by stakeholders pertained to accurate and well summarized information on relevant issues and current practices with audit related information also being a priority.

Responses to improving communications and the Board's overall approach to its relationship with stakeholders were similar; the most common response was a request for more face-to-face interaction.

Capacity & Execution of Mandate (Section 3)

This section examined stakeholders' perceptions of the Board's *capacity* to do certain things given its current mission, structure and resources, and how well it was *actually doing*.

The two concerns expressed about the Board's **independence** related to the same two stakeholder groups as in 2006 – independence from the provincial government and

environmental groups. The closely related issue of **holding others accountable** elicited a few concerns including the Board being too activist and insufficient Board follow up on a report.

As for **working for the public's interest**, the two concerns of 2010 related to capacity and execution, whereas in 2006 the issue was *how* the public interest was determined and *who* determined it.

Despite one concern about sensationalized media releases, concern over **bias, impartiality and/or neutrality** was less prevalent than in 2006. A couple of concerns about transparency related to clarity on *how* an audit or report focus was selected.

Suggestions for improving the Board's capacity related to both capacity and execution and included an increase in and more efficient utilization of Board resources; an expanded mandate; and, improved communication with decision makers and community outreach.

The Board's Future Focus (Section 4)

60% of respondents said there was a greater need today for an independent watchdog over the forest and range industries with 24% feeling the need was about the same now as it was when the Board was created. 88% said that all industries operating on the land base should be subject to the same degree of oversight. Reasons included the interconnectedness and cumulative impact of individual operators and industries; ensuring the requisite transparency and accountability to protect the public's interest; and, ensuring a level playing field and fairness.

Suggestions for the Board's focus in the future fell within, on and beyond the Board's current mandate. 'Within' suggestions called for both fewer and more audits (e.g., on 1st Nations and small tenure holders) along with narrowing the audit focus onto hi-risk operators. Changes to Special Investigations included greater clarity on the selection strategy and greater understanding by the public of the Board's watchdog role re: audits vs. reports. In its relationship with other regulators, there should be a greater degree of coordination and integration, in part to ensure a greater focus on "the whole". Several respondents called for a review of the professional reliance model.

Future focus suggestions 'on' the current mandate called for the Board to examine, clarify and/or restore its focus on and/or stakeholder confidence in its existing mandate. 'Outside' the current mandate was the broad support amongst government and industry for the Board expanding its existing mandate to include the activities of other players in the resources sector, including mining, outdoor recreation and oil and gas.