

# Community resiliency: Contribution from the forest resources sector

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## Abstract

Forest-dependent communities in British Columbia are facing a crisis brought about by uncertainty surrounding their future economic viability. For over 45 years, the provincial government has successfully applied the same forest sector model, but it has shown signs of faltering in the last 15 years due to changes involving policies, investors in forest companies, and constraints imposed through the Canada-US Softwood Lumber Agreement. The combination of these influences has resulted in serious deterioration of the connection between the forest companies and forest-dependent communities, thereby affecting the sustainability of these communities. The resiliency of forest-dependent communities (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) is critical in this province and depends on a holistic application of environmental, health and wellness, economic, and human capital within the community to create wealth and productivity. The evolving forest sector must contribute to achieving this goal.

As a community struggles with an uncertain future and tough economic times, it requires deployment of its resources in an efficient and effective manner. This is best realized through a strategic approach that begins with identifying a vision and goals for community resiliency. Once this groundwork is established, a strategic plan will help to focus available resources on appropriate actions to achieve resiliency.

**KEYWORDS:** *community resiliency, forest sector, holistic approach.*

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## Introduction

For over 45 years, British Columbia's provincial government has focused on assisting the forest sector to build economic wealth. This has been accomplished through the provision of timber harvesting rights in exchange for the establishment of lumber mills and the creation of jobs. Although this approach worked well until the 1990s, the last 15 years has seen a decline in the global competitiveness of our forest industry exposing the need for a major policy shift. The government responded by eliminating the appurtenancy clause<sup>1</sup> in the *Forest Act* and by providing companies with assistance to increase their global competitiveness. It was assumed that if companies became more globally competitive, jobs and wealth generation would improve, resulting in the betterment of both the companies and the residents of British Columbia.

The push to achieve global competitiveness, primarily in commodity market businesses, has resulted in the consolidation of forest companies. In the view of those who support the primary wood products industry, you have to be large to attract the needed capital. Such consolidation is not unique to British Columbia and has been experienced around the world. In addition, company ownership has shifted from a base of individual and small investors who desired to be part of the local forest sector, to major investors involved in pension fund management and other financial institutions. The goals and objectives of these new investors have changed forest company management and subsequently the province's forest sector. The emphasis has shifted from wealth creation with a community focus (Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal) to wealth creation with a more corporate and investor focus.

The Canada-US Softwood Lumber Agreement has significantly affected the province's policy framework for forest management. Previously, the provincial government would change legislation and policy to meet the needs of the domestic situation. Now, the government must consider the impact of its policies on this agreement, thereby limiting its flexibility.

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between forest companies and forest-dependent communities. As a result, a great deal of uncertainty surrounds the future economic viability of these communities. This discomfort is amplified by the impacts of other global influences, such as the current recession and climate change manifested through the mountain pine beetle infestation. British Columbia communities that depend on forest resources are in a state of crisis.

It is critical that resource-dependent communities address this uncertainty, and any future economic downturn in one or more local industries, from a position of resiliency. The following statements illustrate the importance of resiliency in the province's forest-dependent communities.

- Resource-dependent communities are the main economic engine of British Columbia (Baxter et al. 2005)
- British Columbia is dependent on the forest sector as a driver of local economies (Horne 2004)
- Over 100 First Nations communities are impacted by the mountain pine beetle (George 2007)
- Natural resources exports are key to capitalize on Asia-Pacific international trade opportunities (BC Ministry of Small Business, Technology, and Economic Development 2007)
- Communities are the foundation of British Columbia. They are individual units that embody the whole—the province (Union of BC Municipalities 2004)
- Government should take steps to “diversify and stabilize community economies” (BC Competition Council 2006)

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<sup>1</sup> The requirement, as a condition of the licence, for forest licensees to manufacture timber from the licence in nearby mills.

## Suggested Solution

*The goal is to have the evolving forest resources sector become a significant contributor to the creation of resilient communities.*

The evolving forest resources sector is expected to become more diversified and integrated. In addition to primary wood product producers, the sector will see a rise in the secondary wood products and non-timber resources sectors, all operating with sensitivity to the environment.

The critical goal of creating resilient communities must be accepted by governments, forest companies, and communities. Achieving this goal will depend on the existence and use of environmental, health and wellness, economic, and human (social, cultural, spiritual) capital to create wealth and productivity. The evolving forest resources sector can contribute to the maintenance and/or enhancement of all forms of capital by emphasizing the provision of stable sources of revenue and jobs within a global business environment that acknowledges the social expectations of both residents and corporate customers. The actions and successes of the sector will determine its contribution to community resiliency.

Nevertheless, the forest resources sector cannot be expected to create community resiliency by itself. It is the responsibility of each community to identify its own vision and goals in relation to its four sources of capital and thereby guide companies in the ways they can contribute to resiliency. These guidance statements will serve to create a climate that will motivate businesses to diversify their investments and

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activities, thus contributing to community resiliency. Without such guidance, it will be difficult for a company to demonstrate its contribution to resiliency or for a community to measure that contribution. Figure 1 illustrates how a community’s resiliency is influenced by external influences. For example, the forest resources sector has the capacity to contribute towards community resiliency through the production of different types of products. If a community is subsequently more resilient because of this production, it will benefit the local, regional, and provincial economies.

First Nations are increasing their involvement in the forest resources sector. The Aboriginal approach to land management is more holistic than the Western approach. This cultural difference combined with a great desire for resiliency in Aboriginal communities requires at least an equal consideration of First Nations needs. Non-Aboriginal communities can learn and benefit from the Aboriginal holistic approach.

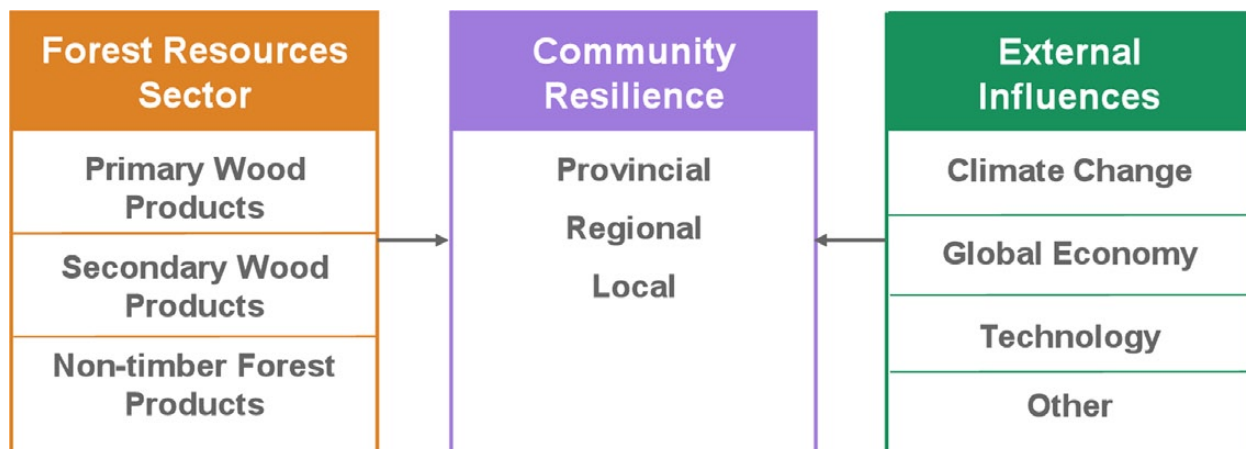


FIGURE 1. Forest resources sector guidance.

To assist in the development of a community's vision and goals, Figure 2 outlines a framework that integrates the four sources of capital needed to achieve resiliency. The following indicators, among others,<sup>2</sup> can help communities identify these types of capital.

### Economic capital

- Emphasis on quality in business and community life (includes entrepreneurial initiatives and community-generated opportunities)
- Willingness to invest in the future
- Realistic appraisal of future opportunities
- Awareness of competitive positioning
- Active economic development program
- Enhanced relationships or partnerships with industry and government
- Skilled workforce (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal)
- Creation of employment opportunities
- Closure of the economic gap between First Nations and other British Columbians

### Human capital

- Evidence of community pride
- Participatory approach to community planning, governance, and decision making
- Successful co-operative community spirit
- Deliberate transition of power to a younger generation of leaders
- Acceptance of women in leadership roles
- Strong belief in, and support of, education
- Problem-solving approach to providing health care
- Strong multi-generational family orientation
- Strong presence of traditional (including cultural and spiritual) institutions that are integral
- Sound and well-maintained infrastructure
- Willingness to seek help from the outside the community
- Conviction that, in the long run, you have to do it yourself

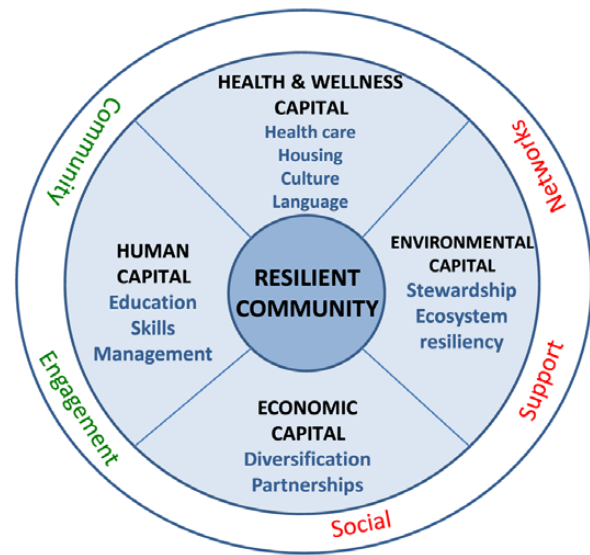


FIGURE 2. Holistic framework for community resiliency.

### Health and wellness capital

- Responsibility for one's proactive and preventive personal health
- Ability to adapt to community transition, change, and/or new situations
- Optimistic outlook or lens for viewing difficulties and adversity
- Ability to cope with stress—communal coping styles (i.e., proactive problem solving, communal responsibility)
- Active participation in physical activity and fitness activities
- High degree of perceived health—perception of general state of one's personal physical and mental health
- Utilization of social support networks (i.e., family, community resources, co-workers, community members)

### Environmental capital

- Protection of representative ecosystems
- Maintenance of ecological integrity

<sup>2</sup> Indicators are adapted from those recommended in the Community Visioning Notebook (Cornell Community and Rural Development Institute 2004).

- Maintenance of fish and wildlife habitat
- Protection of ecosystem processes
- Protection of non-timber forest resources
- Environmentally responsible resource management and extraction practices

Communities commonly focus on one or more of the capital components without integrating the others. A contribution from one source of capital without the other three will not achieve the resiliency goal. Obtaining support to use the capital available to a community depends on community engagement and social support networks. Without these, it will be difficult to obtain the required support.

## Implementation

Moving towards community resiliency and obtaining contributions from the forest resources sector begins with the community. As a community struggles with tough economic times, it requires an efficient and effective deployment of limited resources. This is best achieved through a strategic approach that begins by identifying a community vision and goals.

After the vision and goals are established, a strategic plan can be developed to focus available resources on actions that will achieve this direction. Following this, the community should ask the companies operating in its area how their resource management activities will assist it becoming resilient. A community should expect compliance from companies. Little or no contribution by a company to achieving a community's goal of resiliency is unacceptable. This does not imply that a community will determine the type of company that exists in its vicinity; rather, a community needs to make it known that local companies must contribute to the community's goals if they want community support.

The strategic plan will also include information on how to obtain broad community and decision-maker support for the community's goals, and on how to encourage the provincial government and local forest resources companies to contribute. Adequate funding and supportive policies are required to:

- Assist communities in identifying their vision and goals
- Document different types of capital available in the community

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- Build partnerships with companies
- Implement an integrated strategic approach to utilizing the capital in moving towards resiliency.

Once this groundwork is established, the strategic plan will help to focus available resources on appropriate actions to achieve community resiliency. The technical tools for strategic planning, partnership building, and resiliency evaluation are available to communities. The application of these tools, along with support funding from government and industry partners, should help ameliorate the current crisis in British Columbia's forest-dependent communities.

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## Test Your Knowledge . . .

### *Community resiliency: Contribution from the forest resources sector*

How well can you recall some of the main messages in the preceding Perspectives Paper?

Test your knowledge by answering the following questions. Answers are at the bottom of the page.

1. Should forest management be guided by community resiliency vision and goals?
2. Who has the responsibility for moving towards community resiliency?
  - A) Government
  - B) Forest companies
  - C) Communities
  - D) All of the above
3. What capital should be incorporated into a community vision?
  - A) Economic
  - B) Environmental
  - C) Human
  - D) Health and wellness
  - E) All of the above

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### **ANSWERS**

1. *A vision and goals are essential to guide decision making. Without these, there is no focus and progress will be limited.*
2. *D* 3. *E*