
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2008OTP0118-000728
May 9, 2008

Office of the Premier
Ministry of Economic Development

NEW FORESTRY PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT WORKERS, COMMUNITIES

KAMLOOPS – Premier Gordon Campbell announced details of three new programs to support forest workers and communities coping with the challenges of a changing industry today.

“We’re working with forest companies, labour and communities to ensure that B.C.’s forest sector receives effective, timely assistance to deal with the impact of market volatility and cyclical change,” Campbell said. “The Province is determined to support community sustainability and help hard-working British Columbians find a place in B.C.’s booming economy.”

The programs will be funded through the \$129 million Community Development Trust announced last January by the federal government. Since January, the Ministry of Forests and Range, the Ministry of Economic Development, and the Ministry of Labour and Citizens’ Services have been consulting with communities, industry and labour organizations to develop programs that will have the most immediate benefit for those impacted.

Funding from the trust is consistent with Canada’s obligations under all of its international trade treaties, including the Softwood Lumber Agreement. Over 5,000 forest workers in communities across the province will benefit from programs and services made available by the trust over three years.

Tuition Assistance Fund

- \$17.25 million will provide an opportunity for forest workers facing layoff to upgrade their skills, knowledge and education.
- Funding will cover participants’ tuition costs and other mandatory fees, to a maximum of \$5,000 per worker for one year, at accredited public or private post-secondary institutions in British Columbia.
- Individuals can apply to the fund through the Community Development Trust website at www.labour.gov.bc.ca/cdt beginning May 15, 2008.

Transitional Assistance for Older Workers

- \$85.5 million will provide financial assistance to help older forest workers transition to retirement.
- Individuals will be able to apply for funding through a secretariat that will be established to administer the program. The secretariat is expected to begin receiving applications by mid-June, 2008.

Job Opportunities Program

- \$26.25 million to begin providing immediate assistance to forest workers and forestry-dependent communities in British Columbia.
- Includes \$2 million in direct assistance to both Mackenzie and Fort St. James, two of B.C.'s most forestry-dependent and highly impacted communities.
- The program will support silviculture and reforestation in urban areas, forest fuel management and other forestry programs to provide short-term employment opportunities to assist communities and forest workers affected by layoffs.
- The employment component will be administered by PricewaterhouseCoopers. Communities, organizations, and forest and range licensees can obtain information on submitting expressions of interest from the Community Development Trust website beginning in June.
- Projects may include tree planting, forest fuel management, silviculture treatments in urban areas, grassland ecosystem restoration, natural range barriers restoration, fish passage restoration, roadside brushing, invasive plant management, recreation sites and trails.
- Forestry jobs created through the fund will be paid at rates appropriate to the skills and qualifications required by the work.

To inquire about applying for assistance from the Community Development Trust, phone:

- 1-800 663-7867 from B.C. communities outside Vancouver and Victoria
- 604 660-2421 from Vancouver
- 387-6121 from Victoria

Or, check the Community Development Trust website at:

www.labour.gov.bc.ca/cdt

Or email:

cdt@gov.bc.ca

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

Media contact: Bridgitte Anderson
Press Secretary
Office of the Premier
604 307-7177

Rena Kendall-Craden
Communications Director
Ministry of Economic Development
250 952-0152

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca.