



PO Box 879, 1027 Aldous Street, Smithers, BC V0J 2N0
Telephone (250) 847-1600 ~ Fax (250) 847-1601 ~ www.smithers.ca

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
February 6, 2023
#2023-01

TRANSITIONING FORESTRY SECTOR

SMITHERS – On January 25th, 2023, the Canfor Corporation announced the temporary closure of the Houston sawmill in April 2023. Pending approval from Canfor's board of directors, the plan is to rebuild a modern facility over the next two years. The Town of Smithers acknowledges the upcoming challenges the District of Houston and the region will face and will provide support where possible.

On the day of the announcement, the Province of BC released the Ministers' statement on Canfor's restructuring. Bruce Ralston, Minister of Forests, and Brenda Bailey, Minister of Jobs Economic Development and Innovation, noted that "today's announcement is incredibly difficult for the workers, their families and the communities they live in. Our government is committed to supporting forestry workers impacted by closures and also to support good, long-term jobs in the sector. In the last week, government announced the \$90-million BC Manufacturing Jobs Fund that will promote value-added innovation in the forestry sector, \$50 million in funding to increase fibre supply, and we launched a new program to provide dedicated access of timber to valued-added manufacturers."

The Town of Smithers is aware that this announcement will have an effect on our local community and region. The recent mill closure announcements in Prince George, Chetwynd and Houston have had a negative ripple throughout the forestry sector in Northern BC. In the weeks to come, the Town of Smithers will be meeting with Canfor, the District of Houston, the Bulkley-Nechako Regional District, local Indigenous bands, the Provincial Government, and community stakeholders to understand further the effect this will have on Smithers and to determine what supports are required and available.

"I am deeply concerned about what this announcement by Canfor means for our neighbours in Houston, and I am also concerned for our community. A closure like this will affect us all. My heart goes out to those who have to deal with the uncertainty caused by the anticipated job losses," said Smithers Mayor Gladys Atrill.

To ensure resources and communication are centralized, the Town of Smithers has created a local Economic Resiliency Resource Portal on the Town of Smithers website. This resource portal will support the distribution of information and available programs related to the recent mill closure announcement. In addition to the Economic Resiliency Resource Portal, the Town of Smithers will be meeting with local organizations to form a community response team to address potential challenges arising from the recent Canfor announcements.

The Town of Smithers is currently supporting business retention, expansion, and attraction initiatives to ensure a diversified local economy. An upcoming Business Walk Program is currently scheduled for May 2023 to meet directly with local business owners to hear about challenges and opportunities and to provide local and regional resources. Business retention is a vital part of our local Economic Development services, and our local economy would not look the same without our great local businesses that call Smithers home.

Smithers Council is currently discussing key strategic priorities that will set the theme for the next four years of the recently elected Council. These Council Strategic Priorities will provide the framework for a financially secure, environmentally responsible, and economically thriving community. The recent announcements in the Northern BC Forestry sector are top of mind at these strategic planning sessions.

“This closure speaks to the absolute need for revenue sharing. For decades millions of dollars have been going annually to the provincial coffers as a result of resource extraction and development in our region. Local governments from Haida Gwaii to Vanderhoof are demanding a share of that revenue. It is our position that tax revenue generated in our region needs to be shared with us. In Northwestern BC, local governments are working together to achieve a Northwest Resource Benefit sharing agreement with BC. Announcements like this one in Houston make it so clear why we need this revenue sharing - to help us weather downturns and to ensure our communities remain liveable to our citizens even when a decision like this mill closure is made,” said Mayor Atrill.

Any Smithers residents or businesses who are currently affected or are scheduled to be impacted by the recent mill closures are encouraged to contact the Town of Smithers Economic Development staff. Mayor Atrill also welcomes concerned residents to reach out to the mayor’s office to book a meeting or a phone call appointment.

The Town of Smithers invites residents and businesses to regularly visit the Economic Resiliency Resource Portal on the Town of Smithers website for updates.

References:

- [Smithers Economic Resiliency Resource Portal](#)
- [Province of BC - Ministers’ Statement on Canfor’s Restructuring](#)

For Further Information Contact:

Will George,
Economic Development Officer
Phone: 250-847-1600
Email: wgeorge@smithers.ca