

Fair Competition Among Canada's Certified Forests in Green Building

Issue

Many governments across the country have adopted the US Green Building Council and Canada Green Building Council's *Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design* (LEED) rating system to evaluate the environmental impact of a building project. The certified wood credit in LEED's rating system, however, only offers certified wood credits for Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood and excludes all other certifications, including Canada's two other forest certification programs: the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Canadian Standards Association (CSA). Because this gives FSC a monopoly on sustainable wood in any building that seeks the LEED credit for certified wood, action by the federal government can level the playing field for responsibly-managed certified forests in Canada.

Background

Forest certification provides independent assurance that forest products are legally sourced from sustainably managed forests. Canada leads the world in forest certification. Seventy-five percent (75%) of Canada's managed forest lands are third-party certified to one or more schemes, compared to only 10% of the world's forests.

Canadian forest managers certify their lands to one of three internationally recognized forest certification programs – Canadian Standards Association (CSA), Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). All three certifications set high thresholds that forest companies must clear – above and beyond Canada's tough regulatory requirements. The three programs have subtle differences, but all promote principles, criteria and objectives that are viewed as the basis of sustainable forest management around the world.¹

Many forestry experts, including the Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC) and the Competition Bureau of Canada recognize these certification standards and their role in promoting responsible forestry. The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers issued a statement on forest certification standards in Canada, noting that "Governments in Canada accept that these standards [CSA, FSC and SFI] demonstrate and promote the sustainability of forest management practices in Canada."²

Green building and our economy

Natural resources play a key role in Canada's economy. Within our national economy, the gross domestic product (GDP) of the Canadian forest products industry is approximately \$24 billion – more than motor vehicles, aerospace, chemical, mining and rail transport.³ The forest and paper sector provides Canadians and the world with superior forest and paper products made of wood fibre sourced from responsibly-managed forests. These sustainable practices by the industry protect the environment, conserve forests, protect jobs and strengthen local communities.

Green building programs used in new construction or renovations can improve energy efficiency, reduce waste and deliver long-term cost benefits in buildings. Within North America, there are a number of green building programs that are inclusive of credible, third-party forest certifications (including CSA, SFI and FSC).

Using taxpayer dollars in green buildings promotes sustainable development and reduces the economic and environmental costs of the building.

¹ Forest Products Association of Canada, http://certificationcanada.org/english/what_is_certification/

² Canadian Council of Forest Ministers Statement, http://www.ccfm.org/pdf/CCFM_Statement_FRandEN.pdf#page=2

³ Based on 2011 data.

Recommendations

That the federal government continue to support the use of green building principles and criteria in the construction of new federal buildings, renovations, additions or such projects funded by the federal government (in whole or in part).