

The Honourable Mary Ng,
Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade and
Member of Parliament for Markham-Thornhill,
House of Commons,
Ottawa, Ontario,
K1A 0A6.

June 25, 2020.

Dear Minister Ng,

We write you today on a subject of great concern to many British Columbians, but of particular concern to our organizations, which represent thousands of workers in the province's forest industry, investors in that industry, and citizens who care deeply about forest conservation and the need for thoughtful and effective policies that promote healthy forests and healthy jobs.

As Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, you have been called upon by Mosaic Forest Management to "temporarily" relax federal export regulations. The company coordinates the logging and marketing efforts of TimberWest and Island Timberlands, B.C.'s two largest exporters of raw, unprocessed logs. Mosaic wants the rules changed and says that until such time as they are it will suspend its logging operations keeping at least two thousand people out of work.

We believe that Mosaic's demands are completely uncalled for, and that the company is using this moment of great economic hardship and uncertainty associated with the COVID-19 pandemic to try to sway you to make a change that is clearly not in the interests of tens of thousands of British Columbians who care passionately about how their precious forest resources are managed for current and future generations.

The regulation that Mosaic seeks to have set aside is straightforward. The company cannot export raw, unprocessed logs to out-of-country buyers without first advertising those logs on the domestic market and affording an opportunity for local buyers to purchase those logs. The regulation is there, as it has been for years, to try to ensure that logs that are exported are surplus to domestic needs.

We note that the regulation has not prevented raw logs from being exported from the province. Far from it. In fact, the largest volumes of unprocessed logs originating from B.C. and sold to out-of-country buyers have occurred in the past decade and the biggest exporters by far during those years were Island Timberlands and TimberWest.

We are deeply worried that if you acquiesce to Mosaic's demands the door will be thrown open to unfettered exports and that it will be very hard once that door is open to shut it. Far from being a "temporary" measure, we believe Mosaic's ultimate goal is the complete and permanent elimination of the advertising requirement.

We are asking you to firmly reject Mosaic's proposal and to then commit to working with the Government of British Columbia to devise effective export and domestic manufacturing policies to ensure that as much as possible logs that are cut in the province's forests are processed at mills in the province. Failure to do so could jeopardize thousands of jobs in British Columbia.

While none of us deny that jobs are created when trees are logged, the greatest number of jobs are created when raw materials such as logs are turned into finished products. The more those finished products are remanufactured domestically, the more jobs. It's that simple. As we come out of the COVID-19 crisis, we need to be focused on maximizing job opportunities here at home, not throwing them away, perhaps forever.

We also understand that by developing effective federal and provincial regulations that promote increased domestic manufacturing we can not only increase jobs but do more to protect our forests.

Policies that ensure that more of our old-growth forests are conserved while simultaneously encouraging more domestic manufacturing opportunities must be a top priority for both the federal and provincial governments, not policies that encourage resource depletion, the export of unprocessed products and the lost domestic manufacturing jobs associated with them.

Please, we ask you as businesses, labour organizations and not-for-profits, do the right thing for British Columbia and the right thing for Canada and firmly reject Mosaic's request.

Sincerely,

Torrance Coste, national campaign director, Wilderness Committee.

Jerry Dias, national president, Unifor.

Gary Fiege, president, Public and Private Workers of Canada.

Stew Gibson, vice president west, Paper Excellence Group.

Ben Parfitt, resource policy analyst, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives BC office.

Kamal Sanghera, CEO, San Group Inc.