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Ministry of Forests, Mines and Lands
Western Economic Diversification Canada

\$1.2-MILLION PROGRAM WILL BOOST FIRST NATIONS FORESTRY

VICTORIA – \$1.2 million in federal-provincial funding for the First Nations Forest Sector Technical Support Program will help First Nations with economic development in the forest and wood products industries, announced Minister of State (Sport) Gary Lunn and Minister of Forests, Mines and Lands Pat Bell.

“Our government realizes that First Nations groups need help building capacity in the forestry sector,” said Lunn on behalf of the Honourable Lynne Yelich, Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification. “Today’s investment is an important step in supporting start-up First Nations businesses, while improving the competitiveness of our resource-based communities.”

The Technical Support Program will help First Nations groups develop new and existing forest-related businesses. Participants will be provided with technical advice and hands-on expertise, such as best practices in harvesting, transportation, equipment selection, mill layout, manufacturing, market intelligence and market opportunities.

“The Technical Support Program directly addresses several recommendations in the 2009 report by the Working Roundtable on Forestry, particularly the goal of supporting First Nations in becoming full partners in forestry,” said Bell. “We’re pleased to be working closely with the federal government towards that goal.”

Over a two-year period, the Technical Support Program aims to expand the number of First Nation bands and businesses involved in forest and wood products industries, as well as increase employment within First Nation communities. Industry experts with FPInnovations, the world’s largest private, not-for-profit forest research institute, will supply information and guidance to First Nations businesses.

“The First Nations Forest Sector Technical Support Program is the type of program needed by First Nations and First Nation entrepreneurs interested in developing or expanding a forest and wood products business,” said Chief Bill Williams, president of the First Nations Forestry Council. “This program will help ensure we build successful First Nation forest businesses and sustainable communities.”

“FPInnovations is very pleased to be working directly with First Nations individuals and communities throughout the province as they create wealth from the forest,” said Jim Dangerfield, executive vice-president of FPInnovations. “We’ll be working closely with First Nations communities and our funding partners, the Province of B.C. and Western Economic Diversification, to determine where further investment in forest businesses will result in real community benefits.”

Staff from FPInnovations will begin administering the program and deploying industry advisors this month. For more information, please contact the program manager, Dave McRae of FPInnovations, at dave.mcrae@fpinnovations.ca.

Since 2002, the Ministry of Forests, Mines and Lands has signed forestry agreements with 172 First Nations, providing more than \$243 million in revenue-sharing and access to over 55.6 million cubic metres of timber. Through the Technical Support Program, First Nations can strengthen their capacity to operate their forest tenures more efficiently and become more involved in the manufacture of wood products.

The Government of Canada and Province of British Columbia are delivering today’s investment through the Western Economic Partnership Agreement, a joint, multi-million dollar agreement designed to encourage economic development in the West. Both governments are contributing \$25 million each to WEPA, over four years, to strengthen economic activity and improve quality of life in B.C. communities.

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