



MEDIA RELEASE

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Woodlots centre stage at government house

All across the province, from Vancouver Island to the Kootenays, from the Similkameen Valley to Peace Country, there are hundreds of forest entrepreneurs – members of the Woodlot Licence program – carefully managing our Crown forest resources. There are more than 800 licensees in the province who manage a small, but significant, piece of the provincial harvest. The great majority of these licensees are known, and admired, only in their community. Some of them, however, work more visibly on behalf of their peers with government and other stakeholders in the natural resources sector, representing the interests of their fellow forest managers.

For the next five years, one Woodlot Licensee will be thrust into the public eye, drawing much-deserved attention to British Columbia's vital, yet sometimes invisible, agriculture industry. Her name is Judith Guichon. And she has just been named BC's newest Lieutenant Governor. Compared to other forest tenures, woodlot licences are unique. Many are in the interface between forests and urban or industrial areas. The diversity found in the many forest ecosystems in our province is reflected in the woodlot licencees themselves and their individual management philosophies. Many are ranchers or farmers whose woodlots are adjacent to or near their private lands, their family homes and communities. Numerous woodlots are purposely intergenerational. This alone ensures excellent stewardship. These intensively managed, family operated tenures provide many valuable contributions to the province: forest and ecosystem diversity and resilience, community and social benefits such as hiking or horseback riding, a light footprint on the landscape, and a sizeable and positive involvement in the province's economy.

You'll be hard-pressed to find a more articulate advocate for the importance of diversity, economic viability and ecological sustainability than Guichon. Better known as a rancher and champion of the BC Cattlemen's Association, Guichon has held a woodlot license for over 20 years in the Nicola Valley near Merritt. Her highly regarded belief in "Holistic Management" of natural resources exemplifies the underpinnings of the woodlot program. Managing in the short-term for the health of a 700-cow calf herd, and in the long-term for the health of her forest tenure, Guichon understands that each decision must be assessed for its immediate impacts, and those that will take effect in 20 or 100 years. Her ability to balance the economic imperatives, the social values for the citizens who share the forest and rangeland, and the future health of each "eco-system block," as she describes them, has captured the attention and admiration of peers and politicians at the civic, provincial and federal level. Her tenure as BC's representative for the Crown will most certainly shine a much needed, very positive light on ranchers, farmers and natural resource managers taking care of BC's Crown resources.

To find out more about woodlots in British Columbia go to www.woodlot.bc.ca.

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For more information:
Brian McNaughton 1-866-345-8733

381 Pheasant Road
Williams Lake, BC V2G 5A9

Toll Free 1 866 345 8733 (TREE)
Email gen_manager@woodlot.bc.ca

www.woodlot.bc.ca

