



For years and years, forestry and wood products has been a mainstay industry in the Province of British Columbia. In recent years the industry has been dealt several severe blows: the softwood lumber agreement dispute with the United States; the softening of world market prices; and the Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) epidemic, which has laid waste to countless hectares of prime forest leaving millions of dead pine in its wake. Then on top of this, the industry was affected by the recent economic downturn and several mills, already struggling under the weight of the MPB and market prices, were forced to close or shut down leaving mill workers searching for other jobs and training opportunities.

Consequently, the BC forestry industry and governments at all levels have been working to develop new uses for wood that would breathe life back into the industry – even if in a different form than before. Resting on the much reduced primary saw log industry, several new businesses are beginning to take shape and are becoming successful such as the pellet industry and bio-fuels. The forest industry is determined to sustain and grow and harvest the forests. When a tree is cut down no part of the wood will go to waste.

The forest industry, the construction industry, architectural and engineering associations and

politicians from forestry affected and dependent communities, using a “wood first” mantra, pressed for changes to the British Columbia building code, which allowed for the construction with wood of only four-storey structures. Last year the province changed the code to allow six-storey structures. The result is an increased demand for wood products, not only opening a new domestic market but helping to stimulate further changes in the industry. Formerly the majority of wood products were shipped to foreign markets; a market closer to home now needs supply meaning changes in the customer base and supply chain. It means the opportunity is there for BC firms to make engineered wood products. The new code also opens the door for additional creative solutions from design firms in their urban planning.

One of the most innovative applications of wood systems was seen and enjoyed by Canadians who attended Olympic events at the Richmond Oval. Its expansive six-acre free spanning “wood wave” roof, which used BC’s MPB wood, is a precedent setting example advanced wood engineering and prefabrication capabilities. Wood WORKS! BC (Wood WORKS! is a national industry-led initiative of

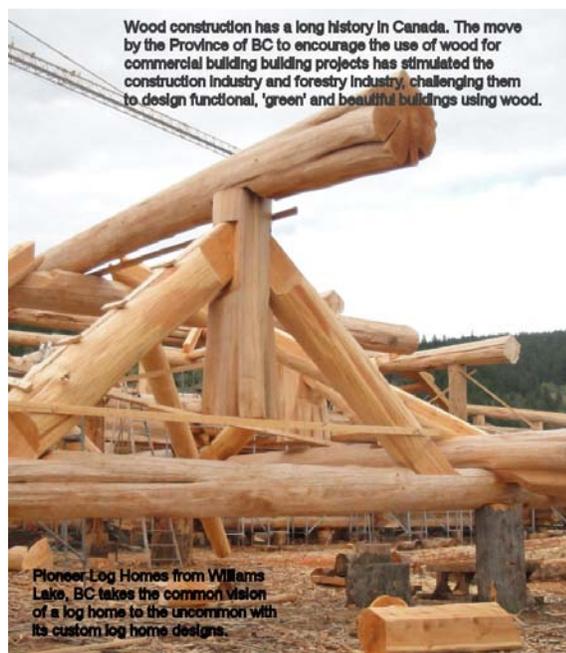
the Canadian Wood Council) provided technical support and wood expertise to building and design professionals. When BC’s new *Wood First Act* passed, Wood WORKS! BC was asked to help municipal governments navigate the “build with wood” requirements for publicly-funded projects.

In April 2010, BC announced the formation of the Wood Enterprise Coalition, which, backed with \$1.75 million in seed funding, was created to help the province achieve its Wood First objectives.

According to the news release, “the Wood Enterprise Coalition is a partnership between WoodWORKS! BC, FPInnovations and the BC Wood Specialties Group. As outlined in the Wood Enterprise Coalition memorandum of understanding, the partners will co-ordinate their efforts to support the value-added forest product sector through promotion, education, training, product development and innovation. ...The coalition’s key work goals to March 2012 include:

- advancing Wood First demonstration and pilot projects;
- increasing public communication around the benefits of using wood;
- developing a Wood First education and training strategy, including support for the planned Wood Innovation and Design Centre in Prince George;
- supporting implementation of Wood First policies and construction; and
- supporting commercialization of new wood products.”

Already there is evidence of change. Richmond, BC is home to the first six-storey wood frame project to receive a building permit in the province. On June 17, 2010 ground was broken on the Remy, a 188-unit condo development project that will supply affordable housing.

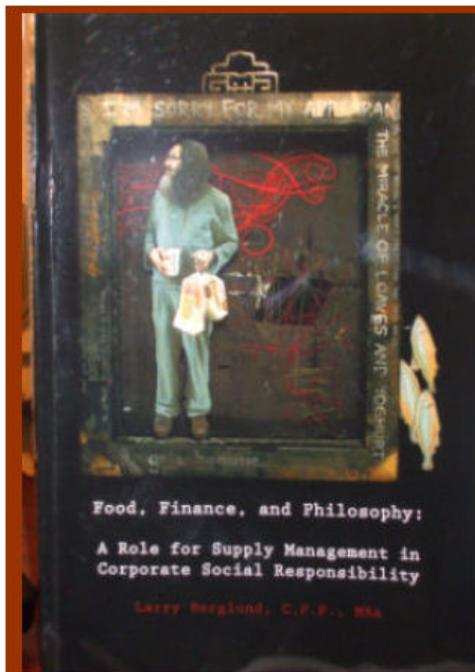


Designed by Patrick Cotter Architect Inc., there will be 33 seniors rental housing (SRH) units supported by contributions from both the federal and provincial governments totaling \$4.75 million. S.U.C.C.E.S.S., a non-profit charitable organization that provides social services to multicultural clientele, will manage and operate the SRH units and also owns and will operate 48 apartments design for low- to moderate-income tenants. The province and the City of Richmond are also contributing a total of \$1.4 million to a daycare with spaces for 50-60 children.

The \$60 million, two-phase, multi-family residential building sits on 2.2 acres of land and will have six storeys on the front and five in the

back and include two levels of parking. The designers are also returning to a practice used 30 years ago by choosing to use wood in the elevator shafts.

According to the developer, Oris Development Corporation, the changes to the building code have led to construction cost savings in the order of 12 percent, roughly \$4.8 million on this project. Work is progressing on the project, despite some concerns raised by the Richmond Fire Department regarding fire safety issues. Both the developer and fire department are working to ensure the building is fire safe. 



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