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## Forestry in British Columbia During 1914

**Notwithstanding Severe Conditions Obtaining, This Province Leads the Dominion in Timber Cut—Importance of Lumber Industry to British Columbia.**

Four matters made the year 1914 remarkable from the point of view of forest administration in this Province. The first was the passage of the "Timber Royalty Act," which defined, for half a century ahead, the stumpage price of Crown timber; the second was the strenuous and successful struggle with one of the worst fire seasons ever experienced in the West; thirdly, in spite of the unprecedented conditions created by wars and financial depression, the forest revenue was well over \$2,000,000; while, fourthly, previous conjectures as to the large amount of timber remaining in the Crown reserve were confirmed by the results of exploration.

The "Timber Royalty Act" attracted widespread attention on account of its bold application of the modern legislative theory which calls for the retention by the State of a due share in the unearned increment upon natural resources. By establishing a sliding scale under which the Government is assured a full proportion of future increases in the selling price of lumber, the Act made it possible for the Government to give stability of tenure to the lumbermen without injury to the public interest. Financial institutions are now able to accept timber licences as permanent investments. There is no doubt but that the added strength which has been given to British Columbia timber titles by this Act was of great effect during the stress of the past few months in maintaining faith in this, the most important, class of Provincial securities and in enabling investors and manufacturers to meet their obligations.

The fire season was one of the worst in the history of the West, being comparable in most ways with that of 1910. But although there were more fires in 1914 than in any year on record, they resulted in far less damage than has occurred in many previous seasons; a gratifying result to which the efficiency of the patrol and fire-fighting system of the Province undoubtedly contributed. We have only to observe the effect of weather conditions in the American States to the south of us to realize how strenuous conditions

were. Over \$1,600,000 was expended there upon timbered areas no larger than those of this Province, and yet the cost to British Columbia did not exceed \$400,000 for fire-fighting and patrol. Property damage was estimated at about the same amount.

Future forest revenue will depend upon the protection from fire of the young forest now in various stages of maturity on the non-agricultural lands of the Province. This young growth, together with the large quantities of unalienated timber, will in a

very few years be required for use and become valuable. The present fund available for fire protection is not sufficient to protect such areas from fire. The direct interest of the public is so great in the protection of these timber lands, some of which will begin producing revenue in a very few years, that as the fire hazard increases in their vicinity it may become necessary to ask that a larger Government contribution be made toward the cost of their protection.

But a portion of the Province has so far been covered by the forest survey of the past three seasons, yet the merchantable timber definitely located in the Crown reserve already reaches a considerable total. The boundaries of no less than 954,950 acres of unalienated statutory timber land have been established on the official maps of the Province, without including any of the areas covered by reconnaissance during the past season. The preliminary reports concerning the latter show that an additional 30,000,000,000 feet of timber were located by our field parties in 1914; and when

the full reports have been tabulated the Crown reserve will receive a further most satisfactory increase on account of unalienated timber that is included in this large stand.

The market problem confronting the lumber industry and the Government's efforts to assist in solving it, are dealt with in the following report. The first hint of war temporarily paralysed building operations in the market supplied from the Pacific Coast. The lumber industry, which was in a weak condition following the inflation of a year ago, was brought to a dead halt. The effects are now felt in every community throughout the Province by every class of the population, for this industry furnished our greatest export product, met the adverse balance of trade

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Henry Lye.

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