

## Dosanjh considers opposing softwood accord

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Vancouver Sun; with files from Canadian Press

*Tuesday, July 04, 2006*

Fallout I Senior British Columbia opposition MP Ujjal Dosanjh will consider opposing any legislation to enact a softwood lumber treaty unless B.C.'s concerns are addressed in a final document.

Dosanjh, Liberal MP for Vancouver South, on Monday characterized the agreement announced this past weekend by federal International Trade Minister David Emerson and U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab as "a colossal failure."

The deal seeks to replace punitive American softwood lumber duties with a border tax on Canadian exports that would take effect when lumber prices drop below certain thresholds.

In exchange, Canada would get guaranteed access to the U.S. market.

On Saturday, Prime Minister Stephen Harper lauded the agreement, saying it made "a great day for Canada."

However, since then discontent over the deal has grown.

The B.C. government, in a letter signed by Ken Dobell, a special adviser to Premier Gordon Campbell, said the province could not support the current draft because it does not meet some of its key requirements.

Dosanjh, in an interview on Monday, said the agreement concedes too much control to the American side on how border taxes would be applied to lumber exports.

He added that the agreement's so-called "escape clause" -- allowing either government to terminate the treaty within 36 months -- effectively turns the seven-year agreement into a three-year truce in the Canada-U.S. lumber war.

"If 55 per cent of [Canadian lumber exports come from] British Columbia, don't ask a British Columbia MP to blindly support something that does not satisfactorily address concerns raised by the government of British Columbia and major industry associations," Dosanjh said.

He added that the Liberal party caucus has not discussed the softwood issue, but he was "sure the party may come to the same conclusion" and oppose the deal in parliament if B.C.'s concerns are not met.

"The [Harper] government may have to deal with this, or we may have to call its bluff."

Rick Jeffery, president of the Coast Forest Products Association, said four issues need to be resolved for the B.C. industry. Those include reaching a more acceptable termination clause for the treaty, an agreement for free-trade in lumber from logs on private land, commercially viable rules for applying border taxes, and refining the definitions for remanufactured lumber that would only be taxed on the value of its raw materials and not finished products.

On Monday, the wary head of Quebec's forest industry council said there are five major sticking points to the tentative agreement that could yet derail the deal, including an anti-circumvention clause and reimbursement of duties.

Guy Chevrette also said he is suspicious of the timing of Saturday's announcement -- just one week ahead of Harper's visit to Washington -- which makes it look like federal officials are trying to rush a softwood lumber agreement.

Chevrette also says he's also upset that negotiators gave industry just 24 hours to respond to the 81-page legal document.

Chevrette says the Quebec forestry council won't respond until next week, when they've had time to have a proper look at the agreement.

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