



May 5, 2016

John M. Melle  
Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for the Western Hemisphere  
Office of the United States Trade Representative  
600 17th Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20508

RE: Negotiating a new US-Canada Softwood Lumber Agreement

Dear Mr. Melle:

This letter is in support of the efforts currently underway between the Office of the United States Trade Representative, the U.S. Lumber Coalition, and the Obama administration in seeking a new trade agreement with Canada on softwood lumber.

The expiration of the 2006-2015 agreement brings a fresh opportunity to assess the impacts, both intended and unintended, of the previous agreement and consider new provisions which will benefit both countries under most market conditions.

The forest products industry remains vital to western states from both environmental as well as economic perspectives. Western mills need a steady supply of logs, fair prices for lumber, and open, fair competition with Canadian suppliers under any market condition. Further, maintaining U.S. milling capacity is integral to addressing forest health, restoration, wildfire risk, water supply, critical habitat, rural economies, forest product diversification and a host of other natural resource issues which rely on sustainable forest management and, concurrently, an outlet for raw materials and commodities.

This is a complex, complicated issue and we are truly appreciative of U.S. efforts to date. Our hope is that both the U.S. and Canadian delegations will come to the table in good faith and explore any and all options toward establishing a new agreement which serves both countries' interests.

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While timely action on this matter is desired, so too is the understanding that negotiations must be deliberate, thorough, and ultimately result in an agreement that is effective in protecting U.S. forest industry markets and interests. If we can be of assistance in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Steve Bullock  
Governor of Montana



C.L. "Butch" Otter  
Governor of Idaho



John Hickenlooper  
Governor of Colorado



Dennis Daugaard  
Governor of South Dakota



Jay Inslee  
Governor of Washington



Matthew H. Mead  
Governor of Wyoming