

## **Landscape lumber seen as promising export**

**Gordon Hamilton**

**Vancouver Sun**

**Wednesday, January 30, 2008**

British Columbia lumber producers -- long reliant on American housing industry's demand for two-by-fours -- are turning to the growing sophistication of landscaped parks in China as a promising alternative market.

"We see an opportunity there," said Rick Jeffery, president of the Coast Forest Products Association, who was in the Chinese city of Guangzhou last week for the official opening of a landscaped urban park built with B.C. wood.

With natural spaces around major cities almost non-existent, the Chinese have begun developing elaborate urban parks that feature man-made lakes, hills and transplanted stands of trees. Wood is the preferred construction material for these oases from the urban jungle, according to Jeffery.

The Guangzhou park features a recreational building, walkways, gazebos and bridges over lakes, all made from B.C.-treated wood.

The Chinese landscape lumber market has the potential to grow from 200,000 cubic metres of lumber in 2005 to 1.5 million cubic metres by 2010, according to research conducted for the B.C. industry. Other countries, including the United States, already have a piece of the market. Jeffery is counting on the Guangzhou park to convince officials of the value of B.C. wood.

"We are just at the tip of the iceberg on this one," he said, noting that treated landscape lumber sells for \$1,000 a cubic metre. "Our target is to get half that market."

B.C. producers are treating their wood with a copper-based fungicide called ACQ. It improves wood's resistance to rot and termites, but has such a low toxicity to humans that forms of it are used to clean wounds and wipe down surfaces in hospitals, said Paul Morris of FP Innovations, formerly called Forintek.

Morris, who was on the committee that wrote the Chinese standards for treated wood, has also been advising the industry here on the best treatment methods for Canadian wood. He said balsam, which comprises 20 per cent of the coastal harvest, is most suited to the treatment. And it has added appeal if it is marketed under its American name of Pacific silver fir.

Jeffery said the industry is listening.

"Here, treated wood is used for preservative against weathering. There is it used primarily to keep termites out. If we can do that, then we can demonstrate that they can build structures in those kinds of climates using our wood."

The Chinese market for B.C. forest products is small but is growing rapidly. For the first 11 months of 2007, exports totalled \$88 million, a 35-per-cent increase from the year before but still small compared to the \$3.3 billion worth of lumber shipped to the United States during the same period.

Morris said the appeal of treated landscape lumber is that it is a value-added product with higher margins than construction lumber.

The Guangzhou park is part of a joint project between the industry, the B.C. government and the Guangzhou regional park authority. The B.C. delegation is counting on the park authority turning to wood products from this province for its urban parks.

"The big difference between their regional parks and ours is that in a lot of cases they just make their parks because they don't have the natural landscape that we do," Jeffery said.

"So for us to be able prove through this kind of project that this wood can be used in these applications has a huge potential in terms of volume and sales -- double, maybe even more the volume we are sending over to China now."

ghamilton@png.canwest.com

© The Vancouver Sun 2008