Cross-Laminated Timber Symposium garnered national, international interest

The recent Cross-Laminated Timber Symposium, presented by the Wood Enterprise Coalition of BC – Wood *WORKS!* BC, FPInnovations and BC Wood Specialties Group, has been declared a resounding success by both organizers and delegates. The symposium, which took place at the Vancouver Convention Centre (West) on February 8th and 9th, drew more than 250 delegates, including 30 international delegates from the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Austria, Germany and from as far away as Malaysia and Australia.

CLT, or cross-laminated timber is among the new products recently introduced in the wood construction sector. Commonly known as a solid wood panel, it is without doubt currently one of the most discussed wood products in BC and Canada.

"We are extremely pleased with the positive response we received for the CLT Symposium," explained Mary Tracey, executive member of the Wood Enterprise Coalition and executive director of Wood *WORKS!* BC. "There's no doubt that this level of interest directly correlates with the increasing interest in wood as an architectural and design material. As a wood product, CLT is sustainable, cost-competitive, and strong enough for many structural applications, which explains its appeal." Wood *WORKS!* BC is an industry-led project of the Canadian Wood Council, with a goal to support innovation and provide leadership on the use of wood and wood products. Expanding market access and increasing demand for wood products through education is one of the objectives of the Canadian Wood Council; the CWC's support of the Cross-Laminated Timber Symposium through Wood *WORKS*! BC is one of several initiatives planned to ensure CLT technical information and product knowledge is transferred to the building, design and academic communities.

CLT made its debut some fifteen years ago in Austria. Now, there are half a dozen major producers, located mainly in Austria, Germany and Scandinavian countries. This emerging successful system from Europe has been identified by the forest products industry and the research and wood design communities in Canada as a new opportunity for wood in non-traditional applications. CLT is now available in Canada, and is welcomed by the forest products industry and the Canadian Wood Council, along with the research, wood design and building communities across the country.

"Cross-laminated timber is an exciting new climate-friendly product that supports our government's Wood First Initiative and helps expand the market for BC wood products," said Minister of Forests, Mines and Lands, Pat Bell, who made opening remarks at the CLT Symposium. "We want to encourage a cultural shift that sees wood as the first choice for construction, interior design and daily living."

Over the course of two days, all major aspects relating to CLT panels were discussed: architectural and structural design, manufacturing, seismic resistance, connections, fire safety, acoustics, floor vibrations, durability, and environmental performance. Guest speakers included experts from Austria, Italy and United Kingdom. The symposium provided delegates with information and a working knowledge of cross-laminated timber, which they can now apply to enhance and benefit their future and current projects.

Many of the delegates attending the symposium were from the wood products industry -- forest companies and manufacturers, and as well, academics, architects and structural engineers.

Kent Fargey is president of Western Archrib, a Glulam manufacturer based in Edmonton, Alberta. "The CLT Symposium certainly filled a knowledge gap – there were some very good technical presentations, especially relating to seismic and connections," he explained.

"The CLT Symposium created a momentum for this innovative wood product," added Mary Tracey. "It provided much-needed substantive technical information for building and design professionals, and increased awareness for those in the wood products industry."

The delegates were among the first in Canada to receive a new handbook providing a comprehensive overview of the use of CLT. The CLT Handbook, published by FPInnovations, provides a reference for an alternative approach to building design using cross-laminated timber, and draws on the European experience, FPInnovations' expertise, and is peer-reviewed.

Under the Transformative Technologies Program of Natural Resources Canada, FPInnovations launched a multi-disciplinary research program on CLT in 2005. Based on these studies and the knowledge gained from the European experience, FPInnovations prepared this peer-reviewed CLT Handbook to provide immediate support for the design and construction of CLT systems as alternative solutions in building codes and provide technical information for implementation of CLT systems in building codes and standards. The CLT Handbook also provides key technical information related to the manufacturing, design and performance of CLT in construction. It is available for purchase on the FPInnovations website: **publications@FPInnovations.ca**

One of the first commercial buildings to utilize CLT in Canada is on the University of British Columbia campus – a building which will house a biomass-fuelled combined heat and power (CHP) solution. That building is expected to be completed by the end of 2011.

"Wood *WORKS!* BC and the Canadian Wood Council are excited about the possibilities for CLT in Canada, and look forward to seeing it become an alternative material for use by the building and design community, and seeing construction of the first Canadian projects using CLT," concluded Mary Tracey.