



## Weston Forest Announces Appointment of New President

Rick Ekstein, President and Chief Executive Officer of Weston Forest, announced today that he will be stepping down as President effective December 31, 2015. Steve Rhone, current Vice President of Finance and Operations, will be taking over the position.

In an exclusive interview, Ariella Kimmel sat down with Rick Ekstein to discuss this decision and what it means for the Weston family.

### **Kimmel: Why did you decide to make this change?**

**Ekstein:** It was the right time.

I am constantly speaking to our team about the importance of change and opportunity. Throughout our history we, as a company, have been in a constant state of change as we grew to take advantage of new opportunities, and occasionally walk away from business ideas that no longer make sense. My job is to show the members of our team that opportunities exist, and then support them as they pursue those ventures.

Our team was ready. It was time for me to live by my words, and let others have the opportunity to take Weston Forest to the next level.

### **Kimmel: Will you remain involved in the company?**

**Ekstein:** On day to day business, I am going to stay away. We have invested very heavily in leadership training for all of our managers and supervisors, and our Vice Presidents have been part of every decision I have made throughout the past several years. We have been transitioning for over a year, and our team is now ready for this change.

My role will continue to be one of strategic support and advice. As I said earlier, our team is excellent. We have some of the most skilled lumbermen and businessmen in the industry. I will continue to be their sounding board, allowing them to bounce ideas off me, and providing advice as required. I have spent the past 37 years, buying, selling and manufacturing forest products in over 40 countries, and I will do my best to continue to share what I have learned.

### **Kimmel: Tell me about Steve Rhone and what made him the right choice.**

**Ekstein** –Steve Rhone is a true Weston success story.

Steve has successfully worked in or run every part of Weston over the past 29 years, beginning with a junior role in Operations and eventually holding management roles in every part of the company, leading up to his current role as Vice President of Operations and Finance.

Steve has been Mill Manager, Night Shift Supervisor, Hardwood Product Manager, and US Sales Manager. He can go into the bush and discuss timber quality, spend time in a sawmill and make

efficiency suggestions, or sit down with the CEO of one of our customers and discuss ways that we can help grow their business.

Steve is relentless in his desire to succeed, he has an unbelievably strong work ethic, and he loves to challenge himself and others to do the impossible. Steve has an incredible desire to learn, and is committed to ensuring that others have the opportunity to develop.

He is a forward thinker, able to see the potential for our team and our company 20 years down the road.

Our Executive Team started working on this succession project just over a year ago, and we are all fully behind the appointment of Steve to President.

**Kimmel: What does this mean to all Weston Forest stakeholders – Customers, Suppliers and Staff?**

**Ekstein:** Good question.

To our customers, it means we will continue finding new and innovative ways to bring products and value to them. We work hard at this every day, and this will not stop. Steve and our entire company understand that our commitment to customer satisfaction and innovation can never stop.

To our suppliers, it should only mean opportunities to do more business with us. Our balance sheet is very strong, our team has the tools and skillsets to manage our large and diverse inventories, and we will continue to search out ways to bring value to our supply partners. They are our lifeblood, and we will continue to support them and our industry every chance we can.

To our staff, this serves as an example of our commitment to our policy of promoting from within the organization. Steve is the poster boy for the opportunities that Weston offers, and I know that Steve and his team will continue to ensure the same opportunities for others. Our Executive team is all young, and our staff should feel confident that they want to keep growing!

**Kimmel: It sounds like you are very proud of Weston.**

**Ekstein:** That is an understatement. We have built an organization that allows individuals to reach for the stars, and achieve their dreams. We have excellent people in all areas of the company that allow us to provide unbelievable service to our customers. While I am proud of a lot of things, I am the most proud of our people and the opportunities that we have given so many of them. From our Executives to the fellows who work nights in our mill, we have an amazing team.

**Kimmel: You have devoted 37 years of your life to building Weston Forest, and the other Weston companies. What are you going to do with this next phase of your life?**

**Ekstein:** Keeping busy is not a problem for me. I have a number of other business interests to manage, I am very involved in Canadian politics, I am on a number of Boards, and frankly it is time I spent a little more time with my wife Lillian, my kids, and my granddaughter Emily.

**Kimmel: Any final words?**

**Ekstein:** I have been blessed to work with a lot of great people over the years as we built the Weston Companies into a global enterprise. This is a great industry, and I truly believe that the opportunities for success are as great today as they have ever been.

Surround yourself with great people, dream big, and don't be afraid to try new things and fail once in a while. Add in a healthy measure of hard work, fun and laughter, and you can achieve whatever you strive for!