











BC Government Old-growth Report Card

Date: September 8th, 2022

In the fall of 2020, the B.C. NDP government made a big promise. They pledged to implement the Old-Growth Strategic Review (OGSR) panel recommendations 'in their totality.' The 14 recommendations, published and committed to two years ago, follow a three-year timeframe (including short-term actions) and call on the B.C. government to work with Indigenous Nations for a paradigm shift that makes ecological integrity and biodiversity the top priority. This report card grades how the B.C. government is doing, two-thirds of the way through the OGSR panel's three-year framework.

SUBJECT	PROGRESS	GRADE
Immediate action for at-risk forests		
<p>The OGSR panel called for interim protection (deferrals) for at-risk old-growth within six months to allow provincial and Indigenous governments enough time to develop long-term conservation solutions. Since our last report card, the province announced deferrals in over a million hectares of the 2.6 million hectares of at-risk old-growth identified by the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP). However, TAP scientists were clear that deferrals were particularly important in areas where logging was already planned, which they expected to encompass about 50,000 hectares. No maps detailing the locations of deferrals have been released, making it nearly impossible to assess whether deferrals have been implemented in areas about to be logged. The province has not shared maps or details about which forests remain at risk. According to new research, tens of thousands of hectares of proposed old-growth deferral areas remain at imminent risk of logging or are already clearcut. To improve this grade the B.C. government must immediately provide full compensation to any affected First Nations to ensure that logging is deferred in all at-risk old-growth forests.</p>		
Funding for implementation, First Nations and forestry transition		
<p>In 2021 the B.C. government committed close to \$12.7 million to assist Indigenous Nations in reviewing deferral options and \$19 million to support forestry workers immediately impacted by deferrals. Budget 2022 improved funding by including \$185 million to help workers, industry, communities, and First Nations respond to deferrals. This was a positive step forward. However, greater contributions are needed to enable both temporary logging deferrals and permanent Indigenous-led solutions for forests on their territories. Funding must consider the values of standing old-growth, the lost revenues from logging, and enable a transition to a more diversified economy that upholds First Nations' Title and Rights and centers ecological integrity. Crucially, the B.C. government has still not embraced the opportunity to partner with the federal government and match funding available to help achieve the international goal to protect 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030. To improve this grade, the B.C. government must establish a dedicated fund of at least \$300 million for Indigenous-led old-growth protection, leverage the federal funding available for the permanent protection of old-growth forests in B.C., and provide additional resources to advance the resilience and land use visions of First Nations on their territories.</p>		
Change course and prioritize ecosystem integrity and biodiversity		
<p>The OGSR panel's call for a paradigm shift to prioritize ecosystem integrity requires dramatic changes in the direction given to decision-makers, like the chief forester and district managers. To make this course correction and amendments to forestry laws so they can be executed. In two years, the B.C. government has only made timid amendments to provincial forestry laws and remains ambiguous about the necessity of permanently protecting at-risk forests and habitat of endangered species from logging. The creation of the new Ministry of Lands, Waters and Resource Stewardship could help to implement the promised shift. So far, the B.C. government has not prioritized biodiversity over timber and economic values as called for by the OGSR. To improve this grade, the government must increase the pace of old-growth deferrals, outline a plan to achieve permanent protection and create new land use visions in partnership with First Nations, amend forestry laws and deliver legislation that protects biodiversity across the province.</p>		
Three-year work plan with milestone dates		
<p>The OGSR panel recommendations were embedded in a three-year framework with six-month steps, starting with immediate action for at-risk forests and full partnership with First Nations, followed by a transition plan prioritizing ecological integrity and alternatives to clearcutting. According to the timeline outlined in the OSGR, at the two-year mark the province should have completed at least 10 of the 14 recommendations, with significant progress on those remaining, and yet zero of the recommendations have been fully achieved. In June 2021, the B.C. government included their own three-year plan in their forestry intentions paper but instead of committing to milestone dates, it describes all recommendations as 'ongoing' work — a clear recipe for 'talk-and-log.' Two years into the three-year framework provided by the OGSR, the government continues to avoid accountability by failing to set timelines and concrete goals. To improve this grade, the government must set implementation milestones with deadlines, consistent with the OGSR panel framework.</p>		
Transparency and Communication		
<p>The work undertaken by the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) last summer and shared by the B.C. government in November 2021 marked progress in transparent communication about the state of old-growth forests. This initial progress is overshadowed, however, by insufficient communication about the province's intentions, progress updates, and actual logging rates. There is a lack of information about where deferrals have actually been implemented, meaning entire ecosystems or regions may be left out of the deferral process. This lack of transparency means the status of at-risk stands is vague, depriving the public of tools to assess the on-the-ground impacts of current deferrals. There have been no substantive progress updates for almost six months meaning the public has insufficient information as to whether the government has made any further steps to protect at-risk old-growth forests. Instead of being transparent about progress, or the lack thereof, the province has repeatedly responded to criticism by doubling down on misleading statements about implementing deferrals in old-growth stands that were never at imminent risk of logging. To improve this grade, the government must share accurate and detailed information on the specific areas deferred, where ongoing logging is permitted, and provide regular updates to the public on their progress in implementing their full commitments on old-growth.</p>		

As delays continue, the old-growth crisis in B.C. worsens. Time is running out to save what is left. Amid a climate and extinction crisis, a continued lack of interim protection will result in irreversible loss for present and future generations. This delay must end immediately.

