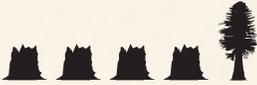


B.C. Government Old-Growth Report Card

Date: September 11, 2021

Premier: John Horgan

In October 2020, Premier John Horgan made a big promise. He pledged his government would implement the old-growth panel recommendations 'in their totality.' The recommendations, published and committed to one year ago, follow a three-year timeframe (including short-term actions) and call for a paradigm shift to make ecological integrity and biodiversity the top priority. This report card grades how the government is doing, one year in.

SUBJECT	PROGRESS	GRADE
Immediate action for at-risk forest (interim protection within 6 months)		F
<p>The old-growth panel called for interim protection (deferrals) for at-risk old-growth within six months to allow provincial and Indigenous governments sufficient time to develop long-term conservation solutions. Initially the government's deferrals only included about 3,800 hectares, or less than one per cent of the most at-risk old-growth. Despite promises, there have been no new deferrals since, with the exception of Central Walbran and the Fairy Creek watershed, two important but relatively small areas. Logging continues across the province in almost all at-risk old-growth forests. The government did create a new technical panel in July to further refine mapping of at-risk forests. However, to improve this grade, the government must follow a precautionary approach and immediately defer logging all at-risk old-growth already identified.</p>		
Three-year workplan with milestone dates		D
<p>The old-growth panel recommendations were embedded in a three-year framework with six-month steps, starting with immediate action for at-risk forests and engagement with Indigenous governments, followed by a transition plan prioritizing ecological integrity and alternatives to clearcutting. In June, the B.C. government included their own three-year-plan in their forestry intentions paper. But instead of committing to milestone dates, it simply describes all recommendations as 'ongoing' work, a recipe for a 'talk-and-log' process with no end date. To improve this grade, the government must set implementation deadlines, consistent with the old-growth panel framework.</p>		
Funding for implementation, First Nations and forestry transition		D
<p>First Nations and the forestry workers urgently need significant funding to support economic alternatives to logging old-growth and reform forest management. This is fundamental to successfully implement the old-growth panel recommendations and must include funding for new Indigenous Protected Areas and the economic diversification of First Nations communities. Funding mechanisms must address both temporary economic relief while logging deferrals are put in place and long-term alternatives. Shockingly, the B.C. government has still not announced any funding commitments for these purposes, despite opportunities to partner with the federal government which committed \$2.3 billion to increase nature protection in Canada. To improve this grade, the government must immediately allocate significant funds to meet both short-term and long-term needs for securing alternatives to old-growth logging.</p>		
Change course and prioritize ecosystem integrity and biodiversity		F
<p>The old-growth panel's call for a paradigm shift to prioritize ecosystem integrity and biodiversity requires an immediate course correction. This starts with giving direction to statutory decision-makers like the chief forester and district managers to execute these priorities. The B.C. government has yet to introduce amendments to provincial forestry laws it already drafted before the pandemic. This means logging permits for at-risk old-growth forests are still being issued, making it more difficult and costly to save what remains. To improve this grade, the government must urgently introduce and apply adequate amendments to forestry laws.</p>		
Transparency and communication		F
<p>The old-growth panel stressed the need to improve transparency and communication about ecosystems and forest management to rebuild public trust. Unfortunately, the government's communication in response to the panel report has been inaccurate and misleading (see our March report card). The B.C. government's attempts to downplay the ecological crisis and exaggerate progress have continued in recent months. To improve this grade, the government must share accurate and detailed information about the state of old-growth and their progress toward implementing the old-growth panel recommendations.</p>		

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