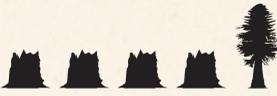


B.C. Government Old-Growth Report Card

Date: March 2022
Premier: John Horgan

In the fall of 2020, Premier John Horgan made a big promise. He pledged his government would implement the Old-Growth Strategic Review (OGSR) panel recommendations 'in their totality.' The 14 recommendations, published and committed to 18 months 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 government is doing, looking at the half-time milestone based on the panel's three-year framework.

SUBJECT	PROGRESS	GRADE
<p>Immediate action for at-risk forest</p>		<p>D</p> <p>Up from "F" in Sept. 2021.</p>
<p>The OGSR 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. One and a half years later most of the 2.6 million hectares of the most at-risk forests remain without temporary or long-term protection. Nine areas were deferred for two years in 2020, another two areas in the summer of 2021. At the end of last year, the province announced that BC Timber Sales has paused selling licenses for 570,000 hectares and shared news about voluntary local agreements between Indigenous Nations and industry. So far less than 25% of the most high-risk irreplaceable old-growth in B.C. has been deferred from logging, and these forests continue to fall. To improve this grade, the government must change course, follow a precautionary approach and take all necessary steps to immediately defer logging for all of the most at-risk old-growth, in particular adequate short-term support for Indigenous Nations and forestry workers.</p>		
<p>Funding for implementation, First Nations and forestry transition</p>		<p>C</p> <p>Up from "F" in Sept. 2021.</p>
<p>In early 2021, the province 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 upon funding by including \$185 million to help workers, industry, communities and First Nations respond to deferrals. This is a positive step forward, however, additional, much greater contributions are needed to enable both temporary and permanent Indigenous-led conservation solutions. Funding must consider the values of standing old-growth, the lost revenues from logging and enable the sustainable economic diversification in lieu of old-growth logging and linked to the establishment of Indigenous Protected Areas. Additionally, the Federal Government has pledged \$2.3 billion to achieve protection of 30 percent of Canada's landmass by 2030, the B.C. government has yet to embrace this target and take this opportunity to secure a significant portion of these federal funds to support old-growth protection. To improve this grade, the government must increase funding to at least \$300 million and embrace the federal funding available for the permanent Indigenous-led protection of forests.</p>		
<p>Change course and prioritize ecosystem integrity and biodiversity</p>		<p>D</p> <p>No grade change.</p>
<p>The OGSR panel's call for a paradigm shift to prioritize ecosystem integrity and biodiversity requires dramatic amendments in forestry laws to make it easier for statutory decision-makers like the chief forester and district managers to execute this course correction. But the B.C. government has only made timid amendments to provincial forestry laws, and they remain without unambiguous legal mechanisms to protect at-risk old-growth 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. But none of the recent announcements reflect the promise to prioritize protection of biodiversity the OGSR panel called for. To improve this grade, the government must urgently introduce and apply adequate amendments to forestry laws and deliver legislation that protects biodiversity across the province.</p>		
<p>Three-year workplan with milestone dates</p>		<p>D</p> <p>No grade change.</p>
<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 engagement with Indigenous governments, followed by a transition plan prioritizing ecological integrity and alternatives to clearcutting. Last June, the B.C. government included their own three-year-plan in their forestry intentions paper. Instead of committing to milestone dates, it describes all recommendations as 'ongoing' work. This is a clear recipe for a 'talk-and-log' process, where logging continues unabated during a long, drawn out planning period. This will only exacerbate the biodiversity crisis. To improve this grade, the government must set implementation milestones with deadlines, consistent with the OGSR panel framework.</p>		
<p>Transparency and communication</p>		<p>C</p> <p>Up from "F" in Sept. 2021.</p>
<p>The work by the technical advisory panel created last summer and shared by the B.C. government in November resulted in significant progress in transparent communication about the state of old-growth forests in B.C. New data shows the province's ecological emergency in better detail and pinpoints which old-growth forests need immediate interim protection. The new data and mapping show that old-growth forests cover a smaller area than previously reported and that about two-thirds of the remaining old-growth are at-risk. It also shows that only one third of this at-risk old-growth is protected and that one third of these at-risk old-growth forests should be deferred from logging immediately. This progress is overshadowed however by insufficient communication about provincial "intentions", progress updates and logging rates. There is no clarity on how many total hectares of at-risk old-growth have been deferred or protected since the province promised to protect old-growth in 2020 and the last available annual old-growth logging data is for 2018. To improve this grade, the government must share accurate and detailed conservation progress and logging updates.</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, a continued lack of interim protection will result in irreversible loss for present and future generations. This delay must end immediately.

