

**February 15, 2022**

**Request for Provincial Funding to Support First Nations-led Old-Growth Conservation Solutions and Economic Diversification**

**To the Honourable:**

**Premier John Horgan**

**Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Management and Rural Development**

**Katrine Conroy**

**Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy George Heyman**

**Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Murray Rankin**

**Minister of Finance Selina Robinson**

**Minister of Municipal Affairs Josie Osborne**

**Minister of State for Lands and Natural Resource Operations Nathan Cullen**

We, the undersigned B.C. municipal leaders, commend the B.C. government for taking significant steps towards protecting remaining old-growth forests by stating its intent to defer 2.6 million hectares of at-risk old-growth.

Through the tireless work of the Old Growth Technical Advisory Panel, the government has endorsed scientific mapping that more truthfully represents the status of old-growth forests in B.C. Your government has acknowledged the irreversible biodiversity loss we face if deferrals and further protection of endangered old-growth forests are not achieved.

We also commend the B.C. government's commitment to partner with First Nations in enacting the deferrals, the pause on all future B.C. Timber Sales that overlap with newly mapped at-risk forests, and your commitment to support impacted forestry workers.

Enacting the forestry paradigm shift your government has committed to will require an economic paradigm shift for many rural and First Nations communities. While we applaud your recent efforts moving this issue forward, we are extremely concerned about the lack of provincial funding to make First Nations-led old-growth conservation an economically viable option for communities that currently depend on the logging of old-growth forests.

Significant funding is needed to support First Nations communities in B.C. to protect old-growth forests while building economic prosperity and resilience. We therefore request the government of British Columbia immediately establish a provincial fund to temporarily relieve economic pressure facing First Nations communities to fulfill the government's intent to defer logging in 2.6 million hectares of at-risk ancient forests. A fund of this kind is also needed to protect endangered old-growth forests in perpetuity through Indigenous-led land-use planning, stewardship initiatives such as Indigenous Guardians programs, the creation and management of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs), the development of sustainable economic alternatives to old-growth logging, and the purchase and protection of endangered old-growth on private lands.

Such initiatives will enhance economic and community well-being for Indigenous Nations and help fulfill the province's commitments to reconciliation under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. One cannot ask a community that currently depends on unsustainable old-growth logging to choose between logging and conservation when conservation options are not economically viable.

Last year, the federal government committed \$2.3 billion to expand protected areas across Canada, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas. Of this, several hundred million dollars are available for the expansion of protected areas in B.C., including in old-growth forests, with \$50 million already allocated to a B.C. Old Growth Nature Fund. The B.C. government must work with the federal government, including by adopting Canada's goals of protecting 25% of lands and waters by 2025 and 30% by 2030 and committing substantial provincial funding, matching or exceeding the federal government's funding commitment.

Additional funds are needed to support workers and communities impacted by deferrals and the broader forestry paradigm shift. We commend the province's recently announced plans to launch a suite of programs to support workers, including connecting workers with short-term employment opportunities, education and skills training, and bridging to retirement. We further urge your government to commit additional funding to these programs in Budget 2022 and to work with industry and rural communities to support the transition to a sustainable, value-added second-growth forest sector in B.C.

Finally, we urge the B.C. government to act quickly to implement the 14 recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review panel, including by developing overarching biodiversity protection legislation, setting new, science-based old-growth protection targets for all old-growth forest ecosystems, and implementing an ecosystem-based approach to forest management.

The old-growth temperate rainforests of the Pacific Northwest are the most carbon-rich on Earth and are one of B.C.'s best defenses against climate change impacts such as floods, droughts, and fires. They are also vital to support unique and threatened species, tourism, clean water, wild salmon, and many First Nations cultures. Protecting remaining old-growth forests will have immense benefits for all British Columbians, both tangible and intangible. For example, studies show that keeping old-growth forests in B.C. standing has a greater net economic benefit to society when factoring in their values such as tourism, recreation, carbon storage and sequestration, fresh water filtration, and non-timber forest products (see attached report and summary).

According to the Old Growth Strategic Review panel's 2020 report and the Old Growth Technical Advisory Panel's 2021 analyses, many ecosystems across B.C. are at high risk of irreversible biodiversity loss, particularly in high-productivity, low elevation forests, and the majority of at-risk old-growth forests in B.C. - including ancient, large, and irreplaceable trees - are still unprotected. B.C. must enact a swift transition away from the unsustainable logging of

these unprotected forests now, while communities can still reap the non-timber benefits they provide.

Yet, despite your government's wise and public acknowledgment of the pressing need for significant funding to advance old-growth protection, very little provincial funding has been committed to implement the Old Growth Strategic Review panel's recommendations while adequately supporting Nations, forest workers, and rural communities to date.

This government has the power to back its words and commitments with meaningful action. With Canada having recently signed a global declaration at the United Nations COP26 climate change summit in Glasgow, UK, to end deforestation and forest degradation by 2030, the province now has an even bigger opportunity for international recognition and impact by ending the degradation of old-growth forests.

We and our constituents care deeply about the state of B.C.'s forests, the sustainability of the forest sector, and the economic prosperity of our communities. These, in turn, depend upon the protection and responsible stewardship of old-growth forests and the vital ecosystem services they sustain.

We urge your government to act decisively on this matter in the interests of safeguarding the integrity of British Columbia's primary forests.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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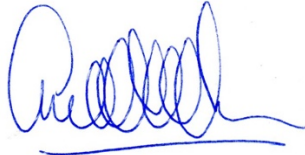
Rob Vagramov  
Mayor, City of Port Moody

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christine Boyle', with a large, stylized initial 'C'.

Christine Boyle  
Councillor, City of Vancouver



Keith Page  
Councillor, City of Nelson



Andy MacKinnon  
Councillor, District of Metchosin



Martin Davis  
Mayor, Village of Tahsis



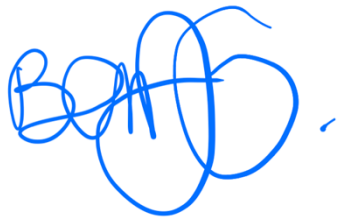
Director Jen McCutcheon  
Electoral Area A Director, Metro Vancouver Regional District



Ben Isitt  
Councillor, City of Victoria



Nathalie Chambers  
Councillor, District of Saanich



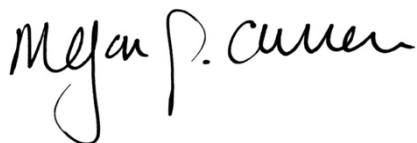
Ben Geselbracht  
Councillor, City of Nanaimo



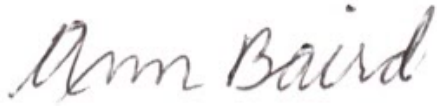
CaroleAnn Leishman  
Councillor, City of Powell River



Ned Taylor  
Saanich Councillor and CRD Director



Megan Curren  
Councillor, North Vancouver District



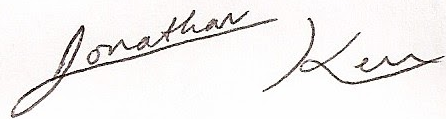
Ann Baird  
Councillor, District of Highlands

**Michael Wiebe**

Michael Wiebe  
Councillor, City of Vancouver



Pete Fry  
Councillor, City of Vancouver



Jonathan Kerr  
Councillor, Town of Comox



Michelle Staples  
Mayor, City of Duncan

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Karel Roessingh  
Councillor, District of Highlands

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jesse Ketler', written in a bold, cursive style.

Jesse Ketler  
Councillor, Village of Cumberland

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rik Logtenberg', written in a cursive style.

Rik Logtenberg  
Councillor, City of Nelson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hunter Madsen', written in a cursive style.

Hunter Madsen  
Councillor, City of Port Moody



Jeremy Loveday  
Councillor, City of Victoria & CRD Director



Melanie McCollum,  
Councillor, City of Courtenay



Will Cole-Hamilton  
Councillor, City of Courtenay



Nicole Charwood  
Councillor, City of Nelson