

Resolution on Old-Growth Forest Protection and Sustainable Forestry

Whereas:

The old-growth temperate rainforests of British Columbia have significant economic, social, and environmental value.

Old-growth forests are vital pillars of BC's multi-billion dollar tourism industry, with tourists coming from around the world to visit the province's unique old-growth forests and parks. They also enhance property values due to their scenic, recreation, tourism, and wildlife values and help improve regional quality of life, which in turn attracts a skilled workforce to BC. They store vast amounts of atmospheric carbon, allowing local communities to benefit from rapidly expanding carbon markets; supply clean water for communities and for wild salmon, which in turn supports commercial and recreational fisheries; and are important for non-timber products, such as mushrooms, wild berries, and medicines.

Studies have shown that keeping old-growth forests standing provides greater net economic benefits than cutting them down when factoring in their value in supporting tourism, recreation, carbon offsets, water conservation and filtration, recreational and commercial fisheries, and non-timber forest products (e.g. wild mushrooms). Local communities across British Columbia stand to benefit from long-term, sustainable revenues and jobs by keeping old-growth forests standing.

Old-growth forests are central to many First Nations cultures, which rely on ancient cedars for building traditional canoes, long houses, totem poles, masks and other items, and on plants, wildlife, and wild salmon for food and medicines. While the protection of old-growth forests in First Nations' territories would support their cultures and help lay the foundation for sustainable economies, many of these communities lack the financial capacity and support needed to diversify their economies so that old-growth forests can be protected rather than logged.

Old-growth forests are scarce in much of BC today. For example, on BC's southern coast, over 79% of original, productive, old-growth has been logged, including well over 90% of the highest productivity, valley-bottom forests where the largest trees grow. Old-growth forests now make up a minority fraction of the productive, forested land base, meaning second-growth forests now dominate most of the productive forest lands in BC.

In 2020, the BC government committed to fully implement the recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review Panel. These recommendations include working with First Nations to immediately halt logging in all at-risk old-growth forests and enact a paradigm shift in the way BC's forests are managed, putting ecosystem integrity ahead of timber values.

We therefore recommend the Provincial Government:

1. Support First Nations communities to immediately defer logging in identified at-risk old-growth forests by providing compensation for lost logging revenues.
2. Expedite the creation of a science-based, legislated plan to permanently protect endangered old-growth forests in BC to sustain the economy and the ecology of the province.
3. Support policies that facilitate a sustainable, value-added, second-growth forest industry in BC, as second-growth forests now constitute the majority of its productive forest lands.
4. Support the sustainable economic development and diversification of First Nations communities through conservation financing mechanisms that assist new Indigenous enterprises to develop. This will allow these communities to grow and diversify economically in sectors such as cultural and eco-tourism,

clean energy, sustainable seafood, and value-added, second-growth forestry while permanently protecting old-growth forests in their territories.

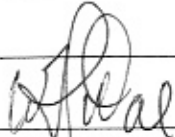
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