



March 21, 2021

Re: Protecting Old-Growth Forests is Climate Action

To the Honourable:

Premier John Horgan

Minister of Municipal Affairs Josie Osborne

Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Murray Rankin

Minister of Finance Selina Robinson

Minister of Forests Katrine Conroy

Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy George Heyman

Minister of State for Lands and Natural Resource Operations Nathan Cullen

MLA Ronna- Rae Leonard

We, the Comox Youth Climate Council (CYCC), write this letter as a call to action for our elected officials to put in place **immediate logging deferrals** and long-term bans for all remaining old-growth forests in British Columbia. The CYCC is a group of dedicated high school, college, and university students between the age of 13 to 25 from the Comox Valley. We have come together to organise because we see that we need to do our part fighting the climate crisis. **We demand that our elected officials act as climate leaders and immediately stop the destruction of the globally essential carbon sinks that are BC's remaining old-growth forests.**

On March 26th, Teal Jones could win an injunction to **remove protesters and begin logging Fairy Creek**, one of the last intact productive old-growth forest sites on Vancouver Island. The government can prevent this tragic event by **imposing logging deferrals of a minimum of two years** for all old-growth forests immediately. Decision-makers in the NDP government must take action and create a [total paradigm shift of old-growth policies](#) **before it is too late.**

There was a time where old-growth Coastal Douglas fir forests covered the Comox Valley. Today, almost [none of these forests remain](#) due to over-exploitation and a legacy of old-growth liquidation policies. Under the colonial model, forest lands were treated as *terra nullius*. These policies caused the destruction of old-growth forests in the Comox Valley due to the unsustainable rate of cut and the economic imperative to [replace old-growth forests with tree plantations](#). We, the youth of the Comox Valley, can only gaze upon the old stumps rotting in our forests and wonder about the time when these giants towered in our midst.

We ask that elected politicians accomplish their **minimum due diligence** and implement all **14 recommendations** of the [Old-Growth Strategic Review Panel](#). Notably, one of those recommendations is to **defer logging in at-risk old-growth forests within six months**. These deferrals are now **overdue**. The government should have implemented them by the end of October 2020. Yet, every day the government delays, irreplaceable old-growth forests are being logged and permanently lost.

While the government deferred 353,000 hectares in September, only [3,800 hectares of those areas](#) were at-risk old-growth. This announcement excluded an astonishing **99% of remaining productive old-growth forests**. Productive old-growth forests – with giant, ancient trees – now make up [less than 1% of](#) BC forests. Despite their scarcity and global value for the environment, **75% of these old-growth forests are unprotected and open to logging**.

The IPCC states that we now have [less than ten years](#) to do everything possible to reduce global emissions and avoid climate catastrophe. [Project Drawdown](#) identifies primary forest protection as one of the best global solutions to address climate change. The BC government must act quickly to protect these [globally significant](#) carbon sinks. It is the government's responsibility to the people of British Columbia to reduce carbon emissions from deforestation and associated land-use change through [an immediate ban on old-growth logging](#).

Public support for protecting old-growth is evident: **55,000+ people have signed a petition to end logging in at-risk old-growth forests across B.C.** Thousands more have sent emails, made phone calls, and reached out on social media. More broadly, the Sierra Club's recent polling indicates that [over 90% of people living in British Columbia support action to protect endangered old-growth forests](#).

The CYCC also urges the NDP government to uphold its commitment to reconciliation by respecting [UNDRIP](#). Elected officials must ensure that the B.C. government can **support Indigenous Nations on long-term protection plans**. Such support includes providing funds for First Nations old-growth protection initiatives. We urge elected officials to respond to the [letter submitted to the provincial government of BC](#) by First Nations leaders and conservation organisations regarding **critical funding for First Nations old-growth protection initiatives**.

The Comox Youth Climate Council calls on the government of British Columbia to do the following:

1. **Impose immediate deferrals** and logging bans in the most at-risk old-growth forests (these could almost happen overnight as the Ministry of Forests has all the information they need to do so);
2. Commit to implementing all 14 old-growth review panel **recommendations**;
3. Take concrete action, provide resources to work with, and **support Indigenous Nations** on long-term old-growth forest protection plans.

We write this letter to express the **deep worry and desperation** felt by the **young generation** in the face of the **imminent destruction** of BC's last **old-growth forests**. The CYCC implores that the NDP takes action that reflects its responsibility to the generations that will follow. Our generation of youth and the **many generations to come** will suffer the rising toll [of climate impacts and irresponsible logging](#).

Sincerely,

The Comox Youth Climate Council