

## Backgrounder: Old Growth Strategic Review Five Years On

September 11, 2025 marks the fifth anniversary of the release of the 2020 independent [Old Growth Strategic Review Report](#) (“Report”). Among the Report’s 14 recommendations aimed at improving and preserving the ecological integrity of British Columbia’s old forests was recommendation #2, which called on the BC government to “declare the conservation and management of ecosystem health and biodiversity of British Columbia’s forests as an overarching priority and enact legislation that legally establishes this priority for all sectors.”

In November 2023, the BC government took a major step towards implementing this recommendation by releasing for public comment the Province’s [draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework](#) (“BEH Framework”). The BEH Framework committed the BC government to the “conservation and management of ecosystem health and biodiversity as an overarching priority” and to formalizing “this priority through legislation and other enabling tools that apply to, and can be accessed by, all sectors.” In addition, such legislation was to be co-developed with First Nations, “including affirming First Nation jurisdiction, governance, and stewardship practices.”

The BC government received nearly 8000 mostly supportive submissions on the BEH Framework, which was expected to be finalized in early 2024, following further consultation. However, a period of stagnation ensued. To date, the BC government has not finalized the BEH Framework, let alone launched the co-development a BEH law.

In March 2025, almost 90 diverse environmental and civil society organizations jointly signed a [letter](#) to Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Minister Randene Neill calling on the government to deliver on its stated commitment to prioritizing biodiversity and ecosystem health in all government-decision making and across all sectors. Signatories have not received a formal response.

Since March 2025, the BC government introduced [Bill 14: Renewable Energy Projects \(Streamlined Permitting\) Act](#) and [Bill 15: Infrastructure Projects Act](#). Both Bills became law on May 29, 2025; however, a number of provisions within the *Infrastructure Projects Act* will come into force by regulation(s), which are still under development. Once in force, it is expected that the *Infrastructure Projects Act* will result in the fast-tracking of certain resource development projects by exempting or expediting them through regulatory processes such as environmental assessments, while the *Renewable Energy Projects (Streamlined Permitting) Act* will have a similar effect for certain renewable energy and transmission line projects. The *Renewable Energy Projects (Streamlined Permitting) Act* is expected to facilitate the additional power generation and transmission capacity demanded by proposed industrial development projects, including LNG export terminals and mines.

While the BC government’s sense of urgency in strengthening the economy is understandable, environmental and civil society groups warn that the Province must also move forward with implementing the BEH Framework and law as a strong foundation for responsible development. A BEH law will foster economic resilience while preserving the health of our ecosystems by providing the “ecologically safe container” within which ambitious resource projects could proceed.

Unfortunately, the legal and political climate of the current moment suggests that the “ecologically safe container” a BEH law would afford has fallen off the radar of government decision-makers. On the fifth anniversary of the OGSR Report, the signatories to the March 2025 letter, together with the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, are renewing their call on the BC government to follow through on its stated commitment to implement recommendation #2 of the OGSR Report.