

January 31st, 2020

To whom it may concern;

Thank you for the opportunity for the public and stakeholders to make comment on protecting the remaining old growth forests in BC.

I am a City Councillor in Powell River and a Municipal Director on the qathet Regional District Board. I reside in the traditional territory of the tla'amin nation, and some of the other rural areas we inhabit are the traditional lands of shíshálh nation and the klahoose first nation.

I am extremely afraid of the rapid loss of our old growth forests in BC. I read every day about the expansiveness of the loss of our remaining old growth forests to logging and see maps of the proposed areas slated to be up on the cutting block in the next couple of years. It is devastating to me that we would continue cutting down these majestic trees and destroying the last few remaining areas in the world.

Jobs are not a good enough reason to allow old growth logging to continue in this day and age. There are no jobs on a dead planet and to say that "*timber harvesting is sustainable because it is a renewable resource*" is not the same thing as logging our last remaining authentic old growth areas which will annihilate those areas forever. There can be plenty of opportunities for jobs and a boost to the economy in the second growth market but we also need to address the exporting of all our raw logs (that's a discussion for another time.)

The City of Powell River was one of the first communities in Canada to declare a Climate Emergency and now there are hundreds of communities throughout the world all declaring that we are in climate crisis and heading for climate chaos if we don't start sequestering more carbon and reducing the amount of carbon we release into the atmosphere. Leaving our remaining old growth forested areas can only help to regulate the temperatures of our regions, reduce the risks of wildfires, reduce the risks of flooding and landslides and help sequester carbon not only in the trees but also in the rich soils and undergrowth that are found in old growth temperate rainforests. If the Province of BC is looking for rationale for prohibiting any further logging of old growth forests in BC, just declare a Climate Emergency and say that a moratorium must be implemented at this time while the Province addresses the Climate Crisis.

In our backcountry of the qathet Regional District we have some of the most remote, untouched mountain wilderness in the world where the biodiversity is like nowhere else. Our backcountry areas contain world-class climbing, hiking, mountaineering, fishing, exploring destinations and are threatened to be destroyed by the logging of the last small areas of old growth. These areas are not easy to access for climbers & mountaineers, nor are they easy to access and log for the logging companies requiring expensive heli-logging operations. The recreational users understand and appreciate that access into these areas has been made possible by the logging companies putting in roads and access points but again, there has to be some balance to what is being allowed to be harvested in these days of the reality of climate change and a warming planet.

There are world-class climbing walls in our BC backcountry that rival famous climbing walls like ones found in Yosemite National Park where climbers will travel from around the world to tackle these walls. Part of that experience here in our backcountry is journeying through some amazing stands of old growth forest and revelling in the unique biodiversity, breathing in the cleanest air on the planet and witnessing different species of birds, rodents, amphibians and mammals that inhabit these stands and may not be found in many other places in the world. One of my roles as an elected official is considering economic opportunities for our region and I am all about encouraging more eco-tourism and recreational opportunities above resource depletion and degradation of our existing land.

The rules and regulations MUST become stricter and a complete moratorium must be instituted on existing remaining old growth forested areas in BC, especially areas that are now difficult to log requiring complex high-risk helicopter logging in steep terrain where likely the entire hillside will come down and devastate the area. In any areas slated to be logged that will destroy an old growth area below in the valley, there should be a moratorium on the logging. There should be new mapping of the remaining old growth stands and an establishment of more protected old growth areas. Recreation and Eco-Tourism must be considered when looking at the complete economic picture of a region when considering allowing logging to happen. And protecting the biodiversity of old growth areas is crucial to saving our planet and all living species. There are plants and fungi that only grow in old growth areas that scientists are just discovering to have incredible health benefits that are just being tapped into. We are just scratching the surface of understanding all the immense benefits that old growth areas hold for us. Once an old growth region is logged, it will never come back to the same state it would have been if left alone. We can never re-grow and reinvent those eco-systems. They are lost forever.

I implore the Government of the Province of British Columbia to impose a complete moratorium on the logging of old growth forests immediately and refine the definition and mapping of old growth areas in the process. Protect the remaining old growth areas we have left please.

Yours humbly,

CaroleAnn Leishman

City Councillor, Powell River

Municipal Director, qathet Regional District Board