



**Forest
Practices
Board**

Strategic Plan 2019-2022

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STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Who We Are

Born out of BC's War in the Woods in the early 1990s, for over 24 years now the Forest Practices Board has served a key role in advancing the public interest in forest and range practices in the province. Through our audits, investigations, reports and recommendations, we have worked to address public concerns, build public trust, and encourage continuous improvement of forest and range practices and legislation.

In the past 24 years we have:

- Produced 230 audits of over 400 licensees and government's BC Timber Sales program
- Responded to over 400 complaints and 1200 concerns from the public
- Requested or participated in 90 appeals
- Carried out 50 special investigations
- Produced 57 special reports
- Made over 500 recommendations, of which a significant portion have been implemented.

The impact of our work, and the regard we have achieved, are based on doing high quality work, maintaining independence and impartiality, and keeping the public interest at the fore.

Much has changed since the Board was first created. Public concerns about reforestation and protection of streams have given way to today's concerns about much broader issues of water, wildfire, forest health and species survival and the role and influence of climate change on our forests.

As we look to the future, we have the opportunity to build on the foundation that has been established, to evolve our focus to ensure we are addressing the public interests and concerns of today and tomorrow.

WHAT ARE FOREST AND RANGE PRACTICES?

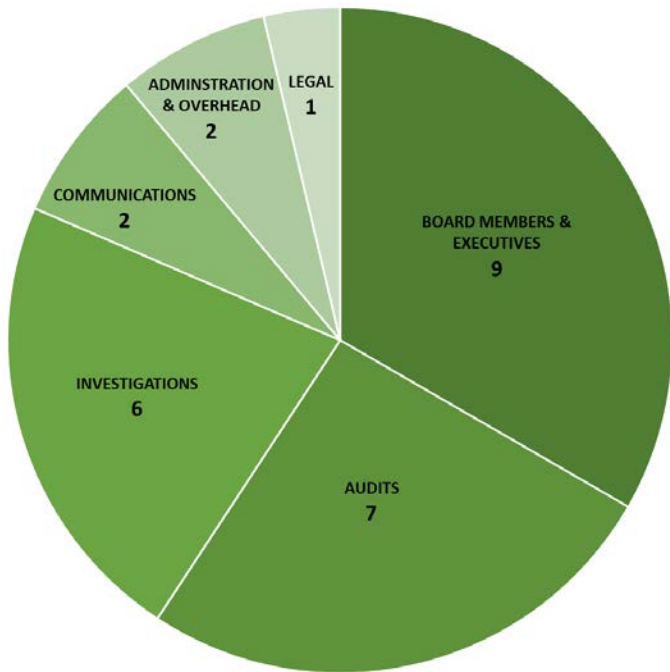
- Planning of forest operations (e.g., forest stewardship plans, road and cutblock site plans)
- Road construction, maintenance and deactivation
- Timber harvesting
- Silviculture (e.g., reforestation, site treatments, free-growing obligations)
- Fire protection
- Cattle grazing
- Hay cutting

Our Independence

Our authority comes from the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA), which gives us our mandate to undertake audits and investigations, address public complaints, and make special reports and recommendations. We are independent of the Executive Branch of the province (i.e., the Cabinet); we report directly to the public and are designed to serve the public interest. We maintain our independence by managing our own independent budget, determining what work we do, publishing our own reports and recommendations without approval by government or any other party, and by maintaining our own offices and support services separate from any government ministry.

Although we operate independently, our work can be reviewed by the Auditor General, the Comptroller General for financial matters and the Ombudsperson for fairness of process matters.

Our Organization and People



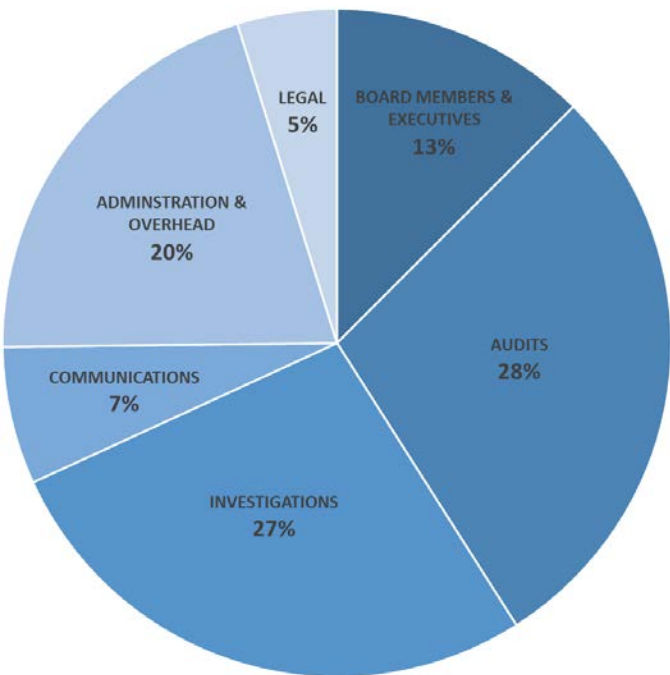
The organization consists of a Board, made up of a full time Chair and part-time board members, and a staff of professionals who carry out the day to day work. The Board Chair is appointed by the government through an order-in-council following a merit based process. FRPA provides that part time board members may be appointed by Cabinet “after consultation with the Chair” and following a merit based process. We have always strived to ensure Board members come from different parts of the province and have a variety of backgrounds in the forestry, range and

environmental sectors. Board members do not represent specific stakeholders, but are appointed to represent the general public interest in BC forest and range lands.

We currently have a staff of 20; primarily professional foresters, biologists, and engineers. We have our own in-house legal counsel, accounting, IT and communications staff in order to preserve our independence from central government. Government does provide some human resources and finance services. Board staff are all *Public Service Act* employees.

Our Budget

We have our own budget, separate from any ministry. The Chair is accountable for the budget and the Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development represents the Board during the annual estimates. Our 2019/20 budget is \$3.8 million and has been the same since 2004/5.



HOW WE DEVELOPED THIS PLAN

Planning Process

DEC 2018

- **REVIEW**

Our planning process began with a review of the current and past strategic plans and priorities developed by past Boards.

JAN - FEB
2019

- **MISSION & KEY TERMS**

Considered our mission and what we mean by key terms such as *public interest* and *sound forest and range practices*. Through this process, we established a shared understanding of how we as a Board see and understand our mission.

MAR 2019

- **ONE-DAY MEETING**

Reviewed our legal mandate and current mission, values and guiding principles. During that session we also met with representatives from government, the forest industry and the environmental community to hear their perspectives on the Board and where we should focus efforts in the coming years.

APR 2019

- **MAIN PLANNING SESSION**

Spent two full days exploring current issues in forest and range management, and considering potential strategic priorities for the future.

MAY 2019

- **SURVEY**

Surveyed our stakeholders and the public to get feedback on our mission and values and guiding principles and ideas for the focus of our future work—to better understand the concerns of today and the areas where people think we can best contribute to continuous improvement of sound forest and range practices in the future.

JUN 2019

- **DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN**

Pulled all the information and ideas together in a draft strategic plan document and spent a full day reviewing the plan and finalizing the priorities.

JULY 2019

- **APPROVE STRATEGIC PLAN**

Approved the final plan for the coming three years: 2019-2022. This document is the result of that work. This strategic plan will now guide our activities and operations.

Stakeholder Input – What We Heard

Since being appointed in August 2018, Chair Kevin Kriese met with numerous stakeholders and government representatives asking for their views on the Board and our work. What is effective, what needs improvement, what could be different going forward? We also met with key stakeholders in March and conducted a survey in May to gather views.

We heard that our programs and processes are valued and respected. All the stakeholders we talked to see value in the work we do. The independent voice of the Board is seen as a critical element in BC's forest and range sectors.

- Our role is highly regarded almost universally.
- The most cited strength we hear is about the quality of the reports; their thorough yet accessible nature.
- We also receive significant feedback that our work is very professional and the approach taken by Board staff in investigations and audits is thorough and fair.
- Some people would like to see our audits look at more than regulatory compliance and some would like us to regularly point out good or innovative forest practices when we see them.
- Our work does influence the improvement of practices.

We need to work harder to communicate with stakeholders about what we are doing, how we do it and why. Some people have concerns about the complaint investigation process and some people don't fully understand how it operates. Some people also don't understand our independence from government.

We can do more to educate the public about forest practices—the good and the bad, and

about FRPA and the *Wildfire Act* and what they are. Some people perceive that our work does not have the impact it should—it is not acted upon enough by industry or government.

A frequent theme we heard is to “do more.” Some would like to see us wade into issues beyond our mandate (e.g., setting of the allowable annual cut, forest inventory) and extend the scope of our audits and investigations to cover other resource sectors and private land logging. A decision to expand the mandate of the Board would be the provincial government's and would require additional resources to ensure that our current work is not compromised. Within the existing mandate of FRPA and the *Wildfire Act* there are many topics that people would like to see investigated that we have been unable to complete.

Specific topics raised for us to focus on include:

- climate change and its effects on forests,
- timber supply,
- management of water resources/impacts to water supply,
- wildfire risks and impacts,
- caribou and other species at risk,
- old-growth,
- soil conservation (especially post-wildfire), and
- the future productivity and composition of forests beyond free-growing.

Survey Feedback

We undertook a survey to get feedback on the Board and to solicit ideas for future priorities. We had 185 respondents, most of whom are somewhat familiar with the Board and forest and range practices.

They told us that the need for an independent watchdog is stronger than ever (78 percent of respondents). Our work is rated as fairly important or very important by a large majority. In particular, our recommendations, audits and complaint investigations are rated as very important.

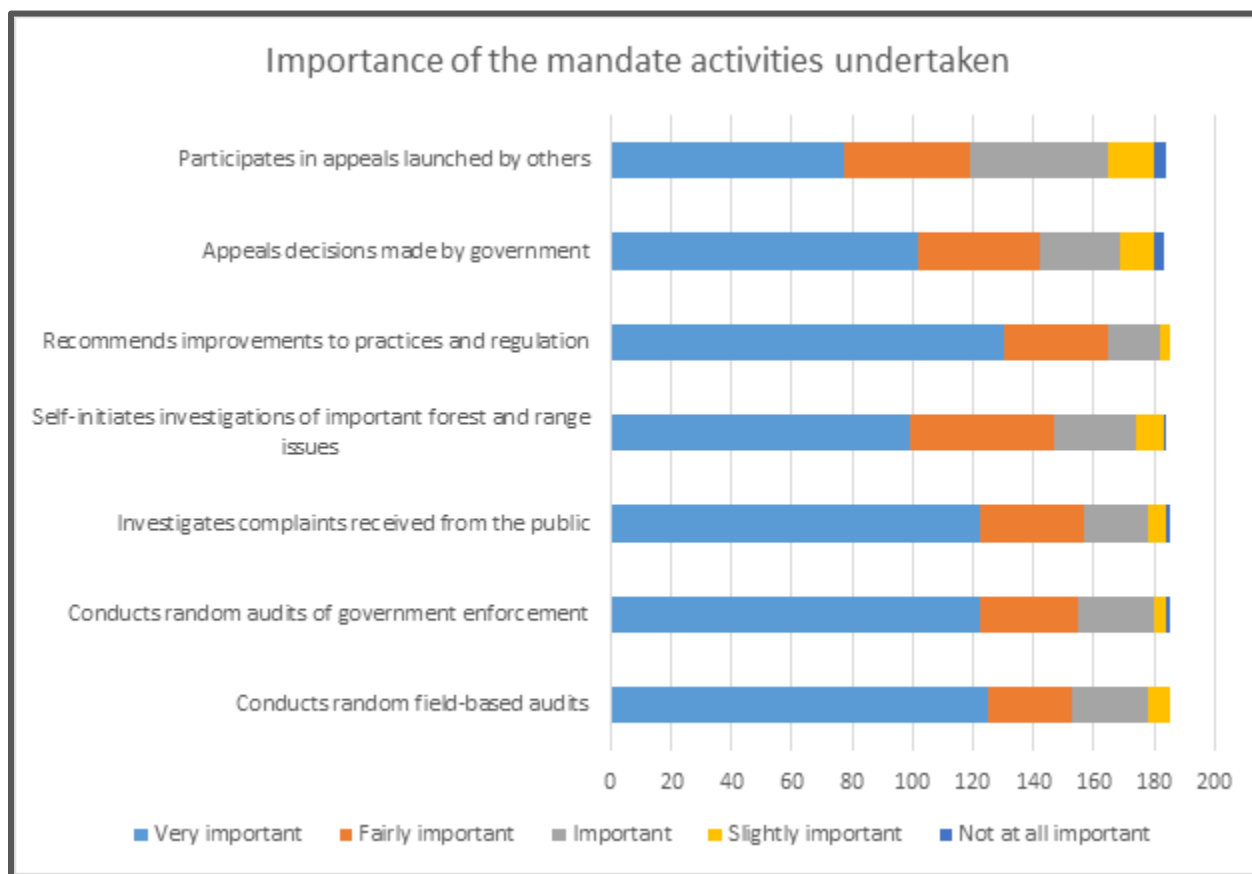
Our values and guiding principles were also all seen as important. The lowest rating was given to our value of *emphasizing solutions over assigning blame* (only 52 percent said it's very

important), which corresponds with comments that we need to hold industry accountable, and have more authority to require changes or impose penalties.

In terms of what priorities we should focus on over the next 3-5 years, the following topics were the most frequently suggested:

- Sustainability/stewardship/conservation
- Landscape level issues/planning
- Protection of watersheds/streams
- Climate change adaptation/mitigation/impacts
- Old-growth conservation
- Protection of wildlife/species at risk
- Advocate for legislative reform

These themes reinforce what we heard from our stakeholders.



OUR MISSION

Our mission and values and guiding principles have not changed since they were first established in 1995. Considering the feedback from key stakeholders, interested publics and others, we determined that the mission and values are still valid today, but some minor adjustments are required to improve clarity.

Mandate

The Forest Practices Board serves the public interest as the independent watchdog for sound forest and range practices in British Columbia.

Our work encourages:

- Sound forest and range practices that warrant public confidence;
- Fair and equitable application of the *Forest and Range Practices Act* and the *Wildfire Act*; and
- Continuing improvements in forest and range practices.

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC INTEREST?

Our mission says that we serve the public interest. We also value *Independence*, and we demonstrate our independence by acting on behalf of the public's interests and not those of any single group.

We interpret that to mean we must represent the interests of all of the different publics, and not those of any one group, even if it may have a greater interest in a particular matter before the Board. By addressing the broad interests of as many people as possible, and not prioritizing the interests of any one group over the others, we believe we serve the public interest and demonstrate our independence.

WHAT ARE SOUND FOREST AND RANGE PRACTICES?

The Board does not have a single definition of sound practices, but the Compliance Audit Reference Manual discusses how the Board determines if a practice is *unsound*. It is important to be clear that sound forest or range practice is not the same thing as compliance with legislation. A practice can be compliant, but not sound.

In deciding if a practice is sound, the Board considers these questions:

- Is the practice likely to lead to long term degradation of environmental values (including timber values) or worker or public safety?
- Is the practice easily avoidable or is there a readily available alternative?
- Is the practice scientifically based and informed by monitoring?
- Is the practice consistent with best management practices?
- Is the practice commonly carried out by other licensees in similar circumstances? Or do most licensees we have seen do something differently?

Ultimately, soundness comes down to a judgement call by professionals on staff and the Board members and each situation is unique. What is considered sound evolves over time and the Board will periodically review it.

Our Values & Behaviours

These values and corresponding behaviors guide us in all of our work.

Independence

- Act on behalf of the public interest, not any single group
- Perform in a non-adversarial, unbiased, non-partisan and balanced manner

Integrity

- Be straightforward in approach—tell it like it is
- Base actions and decisions on knowledge, evidence, experience and common sense

Excellence

- Produce high-quality work
- Seek continuous improvement – both in our work and in forest and range practices

Fairness

- Treat all people with respect, fairness and sensitivity
- Seek solutions rather than assigning blame

Transparency

- Provide clear and concise reports to the public
- Be accessible and accountable

HOW WE DO IT

Audits

We audit forest and range practices on public lands and appropriateness of government enforcement. We can make recommendations for improvement to practices and legislation.

Auditors objectively collect and evaluate evidence to determine if forestry and range activities are consistent with forest and range practices legislation and operational plans. They also evaluate whether licensees are consistent with government objectives for forest resources.

Complaint Investigations

We investigate public complaints about compliance with the Forest and Range Practices Act, the *Wildfire Act*, and appropriateness of government enforcement.

We act in the public interest, and are not an advocate for the complainant or a defender of government or licensees. We examine issues related to a complaint as a neutral third party. We emphasize solutions over blame and typically encourages continuous improvements to reduce the likelihood of problems recurring in future. An investigation does not stop work or delay decisions of designated decision makers; however, during the course of an investigation, participants sometimes change their actions or plans to address concerns brought by a complainant.

Appeals

We can appeal decisions made by government officials under the Forest and Range Practices Act or the *Wildfire Act*, such as determinations of non-compliance, penalties or approvals of

plans for forestry or range operations. Appeals can be made in response to a public request, or initiated by the Board.

We can make an appeal to the independent Forest Appeals Commission if we believe a decision was made in error and that there is a significant public interest that is affected by the decision. The Commission makes the final decision on appeals and those determinations are legally binding. Commission decisions are published on its website: www.fac.gov.bc.ca

Special Investigations and Reports

We conduct special investigations to deal with forestry-related matters that are of interest to the province as a whole, or that deal with systemic issues, as opposed to audits and complaints, which are more targeted to a specific licensee, area, or issue. Special investigations focus on compliance with legislation, or appropriateness of enforcement, and may also raise policy implications. They tend to deal with regional or provincial issues and look at the activities of a broad range of licensees or provincial programs, rather than individual operations or site-specific matters.

The Board Chair can issue a special report to comment publicly on a matter related generally to the duties of the Board or the results of our work. Special reports may summarize trends or findings of Board audits or investigations; identify and discuss forest or range policies and legislation; or raise forest or range stewardship issues to foster public understanding and discussion.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES / INITIATIVES

These strategic priorities describe areas where we will shift how we undertake our work, new areas of focus, and themes that will be emphasized. They affect the organization through changes to operational procedures or policy (*how* the board does its work) as well as key areas we will focus our programs, on where we have discretion on what we address (*what* the board works on). Once implemented, they will drive the delivery of programs that are outlined in the Goals.

Some of the strategic priorities are preliminary in their identification of changes that will be explored; further work is required, including discussion with stakeholders and policy development, before they are embedded in the day to day management of the organization. These strategic priorities will take 3 to 5 years to explore and implement.

Indigenous Relations

We will develop a comprehensive approach to working with Indigenous peoples in our work. This will include protocols and procedures for how to appropriately engage, how to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge, training for our staff and board members in the legal context for UNDRIP and culturally appropriate communications, and identification of changes to Board procedures or policies to support improved engagement. A key to this is engaging with Indigenous peoples and organizations in the development of this enhanced approach.

Increase Impact and Influence Change

Harness the results of our work to provide compelling advice to industry and the government on ways to improve forestry and range legislation, policy and practices, and to inform the public about the state of forest and range practices today.

- Identify legislation changes that can have lasting impact. Identify, where appropriate, best practices that illustrate how these can be practically achieved.
- Explore opportunities to use emerging and innovative communication tools to increase the uptake of our work, and to target our reports to the audiences who are most likely to affect change.
- Support activities by Board staff to improve extension of board reports to audiences that can implement change.
- Through a new performance measure, begin to monitor the impact that our work is having on the regulated community and government.

Prepare for the Future

Increase focus on changes that will drive future forest practices;

- climate change
- tactical planning
- increased effectiveness monitoring

A core focus will be to maintain on-the-ground audits and investigations, in order to ground our work and ensure our knowledge and capabilities are based on substantial field knowledge and experience. However, some shift in emphasis will take place in each program area to ensure higher level issues are also addressed.

- For each of these areas, we will grow internal capacity in order to have credible expert knowledge of the subject.
- We will explore policies and procedures that may need to be adopted to incorporate these topics into the full range of our work.
- Within available resources, we will target a portion of special project resources to these topics.

Continuously Improve Existing Work

In order to excel and adapt to changing circumstances, we will build on our strengths and continue to improve our operations. Areas of focus for the term of this plan will include:

- Maximize the value of audits in the field. Explore options for a wider suite of audit types and explore opportunities to expand on audit ability to report on unsound practices as well as noteworthy practices.
- Increase the transparency of Board policy and procedures by consolidating all existing policies, moving to regular policy updates, and publicly posting all Board policies.
- Review operating procedures for each program (Audits, Complaints, Special Investigations, and Appeals) and incorporate best organizational practices into program delivery, including project management and appropriate use of technology.

OUR GOALS

This section describes the results we wish to achieve for each of our major program areas, as well as for the day to day operation of the organization. These goals collectively deliver on our mandate. Our progress will be reported in our annual reports through key performance measures.

Our main output is reports—audits, complaints, and investigations. Annual

program plans are prepared each year and describe the specific work we will undertake for that year. Each year we prepare and approve:

- **Annual Audit Plan** – set out the number and types of audits to be conducted.
- **Annual Special Projects Plan** – sets out the special investigations and special reports we will begin or report on.

Goal 1 – AUDITS: Maintain an audit program that uses Board audit standards, based on Canadian generally accepted audit standards, to provide assurance about the state of forest and range practices, and encourage continuous improvement.

Objective 1 – Undertake regular audits of an array of forest and range tenures across the province.

Objective 2 – Maintain audit practices, expertise and tools to reflect evolving audit practices, standards and policies.

Goal 2 – COMPLAINTS: Maintain a complaint function that is accessible, fair, transparent, and encourages resolution of issues.

Objective 1 – Respond to public complaints about forest and range practices in a timely manner.

Objective 2 – Develop and maintain investigation processes that support issue resolution.

Objective 3 – Promote awareness of the complaint investigation process.

Goal 3 – APPEALS: Participate in appeals to the FAC where the Board can bring a public interest perspective that may not otherwise be heard.

Objective 1 – Join or initiate appeals where there are important issues of precedent in the interpretation of FRPA or the Wildfire Act.

Objective 2 – Join or initiate appeals where there are important issues of administrative justice in the application of FRPA or the Wildfire Act, such as the appropriateness of administrative penalties, or procedural fairness.

Goal 4 – SPECIAL PROJECTS: Undertake special projects to examine issues of public interest that cannot be addressed through the Board’s other work and trends identified in audits or investigations.

Objective 1 – Annually prepare a Special Project Plan that identifies the priorities for special projects, while maintaining flexibility to address unanticipated issues.

Objective 2 – Complete special projects in a timely manner.

Goal 5 – ORGANIZATION: Maintain a healthy and innovative organization that efficiently uses its staff and resources.

Objective 1 – Maintain a recruitment and retention strategy to ensure staff with appropriate experience and expertise.

Objective 2 – Support staff training and professional development.

Objective 3 – Foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

Objective 4 – Foster transparency through reporting of activities and expenditures in the annual report.

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Our mission is to produce work that encourages sound forest and range practices that warrant public confidence, encourage fair and equitable application of legislation, and encourage continuous improvement of forest practices. Key performance indicators (KPI) help us understand how well we are delivering on our mission, goals, and strategic priorities. The KPIs inform our decision-making and where appropriate, lead to actions that improve policy, process or procedure (they are not a target). As we gain experience implementing this strategic plan, we will refine and improve these KPIs.

KPIs – Organization

- **Reports Published** – We will report the number of projects completed and reports published, by type (audit, complaint investigation, appeal, etc.)
- **Budget** – annual expenditures by program
- **Audit Results** – the findings of our audit program sorted by type of tenure, region, etc.
- **Complaint Program** – the number of concerns received, the number of complaints, reported by region and category of issue

KPIs – Communication & Engagement

- **Communication Events** - We will report information on # invitations for Board and staff to speak about reports and findings, # events attended, # communities visited, # stakeholder meetings, etc.
- **Content Engagements** - We will report engagement statistics such as # website visits/report downloads, # social media engagements, # media stories, etc.

KPIs – Increase Impact and Influence Change

In order to evaluate what influence and impact our work is having, we will work to develop new indicators that measure two factors:

- **Report Uptake** – the acceptance and use of our reports by the intended audiences
- **Recommendations Uptake** – the acceptance and implementation of our recommendations



**Forest
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Board**

PO Box 9905 Stn Prov Govt

Victoria, BC V8X 9R1 Canada

Tel. 250.213.4700 | Fax 250.213.4725 | Toll Free 1.800.994.5899

For more information on the Board, please visit our website at: www.bcfpb.ca