



For immediate release  
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## **Board finds forestry under-used in wildfire defence**

VICTORIA – A two-year investigation by the Forest Practices Board has found outdated rules and unclear responsibilities are preventing forestry from becoming a powerful wildfire-defence tool.

The board examined forestry operations from 2019 until 2022 in the wildland-urban interface — areas where communities and forests meet — in the Sea to Sky, Cariboo-Chilcotin and Peace natural resource districts.

“More than one million British Columbians live in interface areas with high or extreme wildfire risk,” said Keith Atkinson, chair, Forest Practices Board. “Foresters are already active in these spaces. With better rules and incentives, their efforts can become part of the wildfire solution.”

It begins with fire hazard assessments, a cornerstone of wildfire risk reduction. The investigation found that 70% of assessments met content requirements. However, fewer than one in four were completed on time. About one-third of cutblocks either failed to meet abatement requirements or required further work to comply on time. Municipalities, the most populated areas of the province, are excluded from the legal interface, meaning logging debris can remain on site for up to 30 months, even in high-risk areas.

Despite the challenges, the board observed strong examples of wildfire-conscious forestry. In some standout cases, tenure holders completed assessments promptly, followed through with abatement commitments and used wildfire risk-reduction treatments to meet fuel-reduction targets, proof that the knowledge and skills are available.

The board is recommending five actions to the Province, all of which aim to:

- encourage forest operators to actively reduce wildfire risk;
- update legal definitions so municipalities are included in the interface;
- improve co-ordination between government, industry and communities;
- modernize hazard assessment guidelines; and
- incentivize faster cleanup of logging debris.

If adopted, these changes would help turn everyday forestry into a proactive wildfire prevention tool, supporting faster fuel cleanup, better co-ordination and more consistent protection for people and communities throughout B.C.

“This is an opportunity to improve our policies and processes toward proactive, risk-reducing forestry,” Atkinson said. “It starts with better policy and ends with safer, more fire-resilient communities.”

### **Learn more:**

To read the full report, *Help or Hinder? Aligning Forestry Practices with Wildfire Risk Reduction*, visit:  
<https://www.bcfpb.ca/release-publications/releases/help-or-hinder>

The full list of recommendations is available in the backgrounder that follows.

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