



Reference: 283534

January 22, 2026

Keith Atkinson, Chair
Forest Practices Board
PO Box 9905 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, British Columbia
V8X 9R1

Dear Keith Atkinson:

Thank you for your special investigation report – *Help or Hinder? Aligning Forestry Practices with Wildfire Risk Reduction* – and the attention it brings to wildfire mitigation and community resilience. We appreciate the Forest Practices Board's efforts in highlighting these critical issues.

Please find attached the Province of British Columbia's official response to your timely special investigation of wildfire risk reduction policies in BC. The Ministry of Forests values your continued focus on wildfire mitigation policies and looks forward to ongoing collaboration to strengthen wildfire risk reduction (WRR) across British Columbia.

1. Set Proactive Fire Management Objectives

Establish proactive fire management objectives for the interface to reduce wildfire hazards rather than merely prevent hazard increases.

Response: The Ministry of Forests agrees with this recommendation.

Amendments to the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA) in 2023 established wildfire as a FRPA s.149 value. However, additional regulations are required to bring the objective for this value into force. The ministry is undertaking the necessary policy work to inform a recommendation to government.

Recognizing fires that impact communities do not only start in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and that wildfire risks, and the need for clear objectives to mitigate those risks, span both the WUI and broader landscapes, the ministry is developing an integrated approach. This goal of this approach is to align forest management objectives within the WUI as well as landscape-level planning frameworks, including Forest Landscape Plans.

2. Improve Legal Definitions and Transparency

Ensure the WUI includes municipalities and other high-risk populated areas, and that maps depicting the legal interface are publicly available.

Response: The Ministry of Forests agrees that the legal interface should include municipalities for the purposes of hazard assessment and abatement timelines and is undertaking the necessary policy work to inform a recommendation to government.

The ministry is also exploring additional legislative and policy updates, including working with local governments to clarify jurisdiction for fire prevention. Under the *Wildfire Act*, local governments, especially municipalities, have considerable authority to regulate wildfire risk within their boundaries and are critical partners in fire hazard assessment and abatement.

The “legal interface” is defined in s.11 of the Wildfire Regulation as a two-kilometre buffer around the legal boundaries of certain local government areas and applies only to hazard assessment and abatement timelines under that regulation. The ministry does not control, and is not the custodian of, authoritative spatial mapping of local government boundaries, as local governments have the authorities to manage and publish their own legal boundaries, which are subsequently cataloged by GeoBC. The definition of the legal interface would apply immediately to new areas upon any change to those boundaries. Under a results-based regime, if maps published by the ministry for the purposes of informing the application of hazard abatement obligations were incorrect, the ministry could induce error.

The ministry’s WUI risk class assessments and maps use structure density rather than jurisdiction to define the “operational interface” and set risk levels and inform mitigation priorities on all Crown land, including Crown land within municipal boundaries. These maps are widely accessible through Open Data BC and are a primary tool for fuel management and WRR planning and activities across the province.

Recent updates to BC Wildfire Service’s *Guide to Fire Hazard Assessment and Abatement* addressed the gap identified by the Board between the Fuel Hazard Assessment and Abatement Map and the legal interface. The Guide now includes a Risk Class Matrix that incorporates proximity to the WUI, critical infrastructure, and local factors to recommend a level of abatement proportionate to the level of risk. It also distinguishes between the legal interface and the operational interface, noting that the latter may be the more appropriate tool for accurately evaluating risk.

3. Increase Public Accessibility of Wildfire Risk Reduction Plans

Create a centralized, public repository for community-scale wildfire risk reduction plans to support coordinated action, community advocacy, and cross-jurisdictional wildfire risk reduction.

Response: The Ministry of Forests agrees with this recommendation and implementation is underway.

The ministry is working to post completed WUI WRR plans to Open Data BC. While Community Wildfire Resiliency Plans (CWRPs) are developed and held by communities, the FireSmart Community Funding and Supports program is working to catalogue completed CWRPs, to support cross-jurisdictional coordination. The ministry's intention is to move towards an "all hands, all lands, one plan" model for WRR planning in the WUI, engaging all partners in the WUI to develop integrated cross-jurisdictional plans.

4. Strengthen Fire Hazard Abatement Timelines

Require abatement periods to follow an "as soon as practicable" standard to reduce prolonged wildfire vulnerability.

Response: The Ministry of Forests agrees that hazards should be abated promptly and is undertaking the necessary policy work to determine whether additional legislation tools are required.

The ministry shares the Board's concern about the vulnerability created by unabated hazards and recognizes the importance of timely abatement. The ministry is committed to strengthening hazard abatement through operational and compliance measures within the existing legislative framework while it assesses whether further legislative tools are necessary.

BC Wildfire Service is advancing initiatives to improve hazard tracking and accountability, including exploring enhanced reporting for completed hazard abatement through existing silvicultural tracking systems and working with forest professionals to improve understandings of existing legal responsibilities and risks. As part of this work, BC Wildfire Service will assess whether an "as soon as practicable" standard in legislation, policy or guidance would strengthen hazard abatement. These efforts aim to ensure that forest professionals act promptly and effectively under their obligations in the *Professional Governance Act*.

5. Enhance Fire Hazard Assessment Guidelines

Revise and update the Ministry of Forests' 2012 fuel hazard assessment and abatement guidelines to address current limitations and align with best practices in wildfire risk assessment.

Response: The Ministry of Forests agrees with this recommendation and has implemented this recommendation.

New BC Wildfire Service fire hazard assessment and abatement (FHAA) guidance has been published. It includes updated fire hazard assessment guidance document, new fire hazard assessment form(s), and updated woody debris best management

practice(s). Rollout will include initiatives supporting competency for end users. FHAA training is a key pillar in ensuring successful uptake and competence. New woody debris Best Management Practices for commercial operators will address and reinforce best practices, along with training and professional development. BC Wildfire Service is also working through the Wildland Fire Joint Panel to ensure uptake of the initiatives are maximized with/for forest professionals in BC.

A new fuel management prescription guide was completed and published for use in February 2025. It includes specific fuel size targets, clear operational details, and professional sign-off to ensure WRR treatments are strategically aligned and measurable.

Again, thank you for the work done by the Forest Practices Board in examining the alignment of forestry practices with wildfire risk reduction, and preparing this special investigation report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Leine', with a stylized, looping flourish at the end.

Makenzie Leine, MBA, R.P.F.
Deputy Minister

pc: Honourable Ravi Parmar, Minister of Forests
Rob Schweitzer, Assistant Deputy Minister, BC Wildfire Service
Shane Berg, Assistant Deputy Minister and Chief Forester
Karen Wylie, Senior Policy Analyst, Forest Science, Planning and Practices
Branch, Office of the Chief Forester
Briar Young, Executive Director, Forest Practices Board
Nick Reynolds, Manager, Special Projects, Forest Practices Board