



Revelstoke, April 3, 2021

The Honourable Katrine Conroy, MLA  
Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development  
FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

RE: Investments in maintaining Forest Service Roads

Dear Minister,

Earlier this year, the Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia released a new [audit report on Forest Service Roads \(FSRs\)](#) which reviewed whether the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development managed safety and environmental risks on FSRs in accordance with its policies.

While the 58,000 kms of FSRs in BC are built primarily to access timber for forestry operations, they are often used for other industrial and commercial purposes as well. They provide important access to communities and are crucial in accessing wilderness areas and many of the trail networks across the province. In fact, many FSRs are considered a part of the provincial trail network.

While FSRs aren't built or maintained to the same standards as public roadways, proper upkeep is critical. Not only to ensure the safety of road users, but to also protect the environment.

The audit found that:

- The ministry did not manage safety and environmental risks of FSRs in accordance with its policies.
- It also did not complete necessary maintenance and repairs on roads, bridges and major culverts.
- Natural Resource Districts received about a quarter of their budget request for maintenance on priority roads. Almost \$9 million worth of high-priority work went unfunded.
- Information on inventory, inspections and maintenance for FSRs was inconsistent, difficult to share and at times inaccurate. These gaps made it challenging for the ministry to monitor and track maintenance activity.

It is not the first time that watchdogs like the Office of Auditor General of BC have identified issues with the government's ability to provide positive benefits and prevent negative effects of resource roads. The Forest Practices Board (FRB) released a [special report](#) on resource roads

in 2005, which was followed up with an [update in 2015](#), and it raised many of the same concerns as the Auditor General.

In 2015 former FPB board chair Tim Ryan commented that “It is extremely difficult for the public and other users of resource roads to have any reliable idea of where roads are and whether they are accessible or safe for travel. Resource roads are a multi-billion dollar public asset and a liability. Government is not managing them to ensure we maximize the positive benefits of public investment in road development and minimize the negative impacts roads can have.”

The [Trails Strategy for British Columbia](#) (2013) also identified that resource roads provide vital access to many recreation trails and are used by recreationists as an integral part of the trail system. Deactivation of these resource roads would result in implications for trails and communities, including a loss of accessibility. Additional consideration should be put toward the communication of resource road deactivations to local stakeholders and providing opportunities for partnerships with other organizations to maintain road access if the province cannot.

Forest service roads have long been a multi-use resource to British Columbians, but the ORC is concerned that the Province is failing to provide the most basic needs to maintain these roads. We believe that FSRs deserve proper attention and investments so they can continue to be a resource to recreationists and communities throughout BC.

Our questions to the Province are:

- How will the Province prioritize investing more money in maintenance for forest roads given the shortfalls that were identified?
- Given the fundamental role resource roads play in trail use and management, it is essential that trail and recreation interests are considered in on-going resource road decisions. How will the Province work with the outdoor recreation community to assess which roads to deactivate to reduce maintenance costs, safety risks and environmental impacts while considering the current and future access needs and opportunities?

The ORC is an umbrella organization composed of organizational members representing the broad and diverse spectrum of public outdoor recreation user groups in BC. We advocate for access to and promote the responsible use of BC's outdoors for public recreation while building bridges between our diverse membership.

Sincerely,



Louise Pedersen  
Executive Director | [Outdoor Recreation Council of BC](#)