



2022 RESOLUTION SUBMISSION TO UBCM

NEW LEGISLATION TO PROTECT AND RESTORE BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM HEALTH

ISLANDS TRUST

RESOLUTION:

WHEREAS a healthy environment is essential for the wellbeing of residents, local communities and local economies;

AND WHEREAS the cumulative impacts of inadequate provincial environmental regulations impose costs and risks on local communities, including risks associated with climate change, drinking water supply, wildfire hazard, flooding, and security of municipal infrastructure, and may undermine local government planning;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that UBCM call upon the Province of British Columbia to, in partnership with Indigenous leadership, develop and communicate in a timely way the process and timelines through which they will develop new legislation to protect and restore biological diversity and ecosystem health, in a manner consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and with the involvement of local governments, civil society groups, Indigenous Knowledge Holders, scientists, and members of the public.

BACKGROUND:

In 2020, an Old Growth Strategic Review report commissioned by the Province of British Columbia identified several actions needed to foster a paradigm shift in the way forests are managed in B.C. One of the report's key recommendations was to declare conservation of ecosystem health and biodiversity in British Columbia as an overarching priority and enact legislation that legally established this priority for all sectors. In September 2021, the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs-in-Assembly (UBCIC) called on the Province to explicitly and publicly commit to the enactment of new, overarching legislation for the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem health, to be developed in cooperation with Indigenous Peoples, aligning with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and upholding Title and Rights to strengthen biodiversity conservation and management.

In the face of a climate emergency, the ecosystems that Indigenous Peoples and B.C. communities depend on for their spiritual, cultural, economic, and health needs are increasingly under threat. It is urgently important for the Province of B.C. to enact legislation to better protect ecosystem health and biodiversity without further delay. Doing so in collaboration with First Nations and Indigenous people will be critical to the Province's reconciliation commitments and to the creation of inclusive and effective legislation. It will also be critical for the Province to involve local governments, civil society groups, Indigenous Knowledge Holders, scientists, and members of the public in the development of this legislation, to ensure that their unique vulnerabilities, perspectives, and interests are considered.