



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

February 15, 2018

Government not adequately managing climate change risks

VICTORIA – The Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia has released a new report, *Managing Climate Change Risks: An Independent Audit*.

“Climate change is one of the greatest challenges the world is facing. The B.C. government has a lot of work underway to adapt, but it hasn’t comprehensively assessed the risks the province faces, and doesn’t have a plan to move forward,” said Auditor General Carol Bellringer. “And, B.C. will likely not meet its 2020 emissions reduction target.”

Managing climate change requires two responses: mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation means reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Adaptation means taking action to reduce the potential harms from climate change. For a climate resilient province, we need both mitigation and adaptation, and they must complement one another.

Ministries are building their knowledge of adaptation and working to incorporate it into their planning. Specific initiatives include a seed transfer project to help forests genetically adapt to climate change, and requiring transportation infrastructure designs to account for climate change. Nevertheless, Bellringer and her team identified key areas where government needs to improve its response to climate change, and made 17 recommendations, 15 for adaptation and 2 for mitigation.

Government faces significant challenges in three key areas – flood, wildfire and drought. Government may not be able to manage flood risks given a number of factors including a lack of staffing and technical capacity, outdated flood-plain maps, and roles and responsibilities that are spread out across many agencies and levels of government. Similarly, government’s wildfire prevention activities are not sufficient, and to date, have not substantially reduced the risk.

B.C. is already feeling the impacts of climate change and this will likely increase in severity. From 1900 to 2013, B.C.’s average temperature increased faster than the global average. “The events of the past year highlight the environmental, economic and social threats that climate change poses to the province,” said Bellringer. For example, during the summer of 2017, the area burned by wildfires in B.C. was equal to that of the past seven years. And in the spring of 2017, a combination of heavy rains and snowmelt caused major flooding in the Okanagan.

This audit was part of a Canada-wide collaborative project on climate change carried out by provincial and federal auditors across the country. These audits looked at how provincial, federal and territorial governments are meeting commitments to reduce greenhouse gases and adapt to



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climate change. A summary of these audit reports will be released by the Canadian Commissioner for Environment and Sustainable Development in spring 2018.

News Conference Date: Thursday February 15, 2018

Time: 12:30 p.m. (Pacific time)

Dial-in Information:

From Vancouver: 604 681-0260

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About the Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

The Auditor General is a non-partisan, independent Officer of the Legislature who reports directly to the Legislative Assembly. The *Auditor General Act* empowers the Auditor General and staff to conduct audits, report findings and make recommendations.

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