

Proposed Resolutions Submitted by the Prince George Chamber of Commerce

STRENGTHENING NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA'S TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS TO DRIVE MAJOR PROJECTS

ISSUE

Northern British Columbia plays a foundational role in the provincial and national economy. This region – roughly the size of France - supplies energy, forestry, mining, agriculture, and tourism activity that supports jobs and revenue across the province and throughout the country. However, much of the transportation network that connects this region to Pacific ports and southern markets relies on aging two-lane highways, vulnerable river crossings, and insufficient rail capacity.

A modern, integrated transportation strategy for British Columbia must recognize northern and rural corridors as essential trade and supply routes, not secondary highways. Investment decisions should prioritize safety, reliability, and economic impact, with coordinated planning across highways, bridges, rail, and port connections.

Without a coordinated investment in highways, bridges, and rail infrastructure, these constraints will continue to raise costs for business, reduce safety, limit economic growth, delay final investment decisions on major projects, and weaken access to global markets.

BACKGROUND



As the map above shows, five of the projects referred to the Major Projects Office for further review are located in Northern British Columbia.¹ These projects are the Red Chris mine expansion, the Ksi Lisims LNG project, Phase 2 of the LNG Canada project, and Phases 2 and 3 of the North Coast Transmission Line. These five projects are massive, multi-year private and public-sector nation-building projects worth tens of billions of dollars. The North Coast Transmission Line will not only connect Yukon to the Canadian

¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/major-projects-office/projects/map.html>

energy grid, it will reduce carbon emissions by two to three million tonnes per year while powering Red Chris and other major mining projects in what is known as the Golden Triangle.²

Northern British Columbia highway and rail transportation corridors connect these projects – and many others currently in development or newly operational but not identified as major projects - to the ports of Port of Prince Rupert and Port of Vancouver, which are critical to Canada’s trade with Asia Pacific markets.³ However, the current infrastructure is aging and requires significant upgrades, particularly at vulnerable bottlenecks, such as:

- The Highway 97 corridor between Dawson Creek and Fort St. John remains partially two lanes, despite heavy industrial and commercial use.⁴
- The Taylor Bridge is an aging structure in poor condition that serves as a critical link across the Peace River for northern communities and industry. Its condition and capacity limitations create both safety risks and economic vulnerability.⁵
- The Highway 97 Pine Pass through the Rocky Mountains connecting northeastern BC to the rest of the province has been identified as having a significant number of high-risk areas for closure due to extreme weather events.⁶
- In the Cariboo region, the Quesnel River Bridge is another aging crossing in poor condition while serving as an essential link in north-south trade and travel.⁷

Additionally, limited rail capacity, including restrictions on heavier car loads and insufficient branch line access, forces a higher share of freight onto highways, accelerating road deterioration and increasing collision risk.⁸ Combined, these infrastructure deficiencies demonstrate the need for a coordinated approach from the provincial and federal governments.

The benefits from federal and provincial government investments in Northern B.C. transportation infrastructure include:

- Boosting investor confidence in the viability of major projects.
- Quicker, safer, more reliable access to national and global markets.
- Building supply chain resilience through upgraded highways, stronger bridges, and improved rail alternatives that reduce the risk that a single incident or weather event cuts off communities or halts trade.
- Improving public and worker safety.

² <https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/major-projects-office/projects/national.html#6>, https://cmscontent.nrs.gov.bc.ca/geoscience/PublicationCatalogue/InformationCircular/BCGS_IC2022-05.pdf

³ <https://tc.canada.ca/sites/default/files/2025-06/transportation-canada-annual-report-2024.pdf>

⁴ https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/driving-and-transportation/reports-and-reference/reports-and-studies/highway-97-cariboo-north/alaska_hwy97_corridor_study.pdf

⁵ <https://www.structuremag.org/article/inspection-evaluation-and-rehabilitation-of-the-taylor-bridge-gusset-plates/>

⁶ <https://pievc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/PIEVC-Meta-Analysis-Case-Studies-6-BC-MOTI-Case-Study-2024.pdf>.

⁷ <https://bcchamber.org/policy-search/building-safe-transportation-corridor-central-and-northern-communities-2024>

⁸ <https://www.fsichamber.com/sites/default/files/content-files/20220425%20Final%20Report%20-%20Draft%20V1.pdf>

- Shifting appropriate freight to rail and upgrading infrastructure to modern standards reduces long-term maintenance costs and extends the life of highway assets.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial and Federal Governments:

1. Recognize Northern British Columbia transportation corridors as nationally significant trade routes that support Canada's access to Asia Pacific markets.
2. Adopt a Northern British Columbia transportation corridor strategy that identifies and prioritizes highway, bridge, and rail investments.
3. Develop cost-shared funding for Northern British Columbia transportation infrastructure improvements.
4. Prioritize infrastructure funding for projects that reduce heavy truck volumes on highways by strengthening rail alternatives and intermodal connections.
5. Provide dedicated funding to Indigenous Nations and communities to support meaningful participation in consultation, planning, and monitoring of transportation infrastructure projects.

Submitted by the Fort St. John and Prince George Chambers of Commerce

RESTRICTING THE ACCESS OF CHILDREN TO SOCIAL MEDIA AND AI TOOLS

ISSUE

Social media platforms and publicly accessible generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools are widely accessible to minors in Canada with limited age verification, insufficient safety guardrails, and inconsistent reporting requirements for dangerous behaviour.

Providing minors with open access to these powerful and addictive tools without enforceable minimum age standards and mandatory reporting mechanisms poses risks to youth mental health, public safety, and family and community well-being. Small businesses and communities are increasingly managing the economic and social consequences of technology-driven harm caused by the products from large, multi-national companies.

Clear regulatory standards are required to protect children under the age of 16 from access to addictive social media and generative AI tools and to ensure appropriate reporting to law enforcement when credible threats or dangerous conduct occur.

BACKGROUND

Most social media platforms currently set minimum age requirements at 13 years; however, there are limited or no enforcement mechanisms in place. Meanwhile, generative AI tools capable of producing sophisticated text, images, simulations, and engaging in conversations on virtually any topic are similarly accessible without any age verification or parental consent safeguards.

Growing research and public concern highlight the relationship between early and unrestricted social media exposure and:

- Youth mental health challenges
- Cyberbullying and online harassment
- Exposure to violent or harmful content
- Grooming and exploitation
- Radicalization and facilitation of harmful conduct

When serious threats or dangerous behaviors occur online, platforms may suspend or remove users but are the companies are not required to report credible threats to Canadian law enforcement agencies. This was the case not only with the tragic Tumbler Ridge school shooting earlier this year⁹ but this refusal for companies to report the dangerous online behaviour of minors goes all the way back to the 1999 Columbine school shooting in Colorado.¹⁰ We are long past the time of waiting for online companies to regulate themselves.

International jurisdictions have begun implementing stronger youth protection measures. Notably, Australia has moved to strengthen age verification requirements for online platforms and increase regulatory oversight aimed at protecting minors from harmful online content.¹¹ These developments demonstrate that democratic jurisdictions comparable to Canada are taking legislative action in response to similar concerns.¹² Canada currently lacks a coordinated

⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cr73m4x8r2lo>

¹⁰ <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1999-may-09-mn-35473-story.html>

¹¹ <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/media-technology-communications/internet/online-safety/current-legislation>

¹² https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2025/05/how-s-life-for-children-in-the-digital-age_c4a22655.html

national standard addressing minimum age access, robust age verification, and mandatory duty-to-report requirements for social media and AI platforms.

The business community has a vested interest in safe and stable communities. Employers increasingly face workforce impacts tied to youth mental health crises, online harms, and community safety concerns. A growing body of research into the so-called "digital native" generations (Gen Z and younger Millennials) shows that heavy childhood exposure to social media creates a specific set of cognitive and behavioral hurdles as they enter the workforce:

- Focus – Constant scrolling through short “reel” videos has been linked to difficulty working on projects and tasks involving sustained, ongoing attention.¹³
- Resilience – Curated online content fosters a lower tolerance for workplace feedback and professional conflict.¹⁴
- Communication – Excessive socialization using online tools leads to a preference for short, impersonal and delayed response “chats,” hampering the ability to have deeper, live, in-person and engaged workplace conversations.¹⁵
- Expectations – Instant “likes,” views, notifications and other immediate gratification responses leads to frustration with slow worker feedback, such as annual reviews, and gradual career progression and wage and status growth.¹⁶

The cost to businesses at both the workplace level and across the economy from young people and early-career professionals unprepared to be productive employees due to these hurdles is significant. Employers pay the cost through lost productivity and revenue generation from having to provide extended health benefits for workers suffering from addiction and other mental health issues brought on by social media and/or generative AI. Additionally, businesses are having to provide paid and/or unpaid leaves of absences for employees dealing with family members struggling with addiction and mental health issues brought on by social media and/or generative AI.

All families, communities and workplaces are vulnerable to the impacts of online harms. In Tumbler Ridge, where relationships are close and the social fabric is tightly woven, the consequences of technology-enabled threats, harmful content and violent online behavior cost lives, left others with lifelong injuries and shattered families. Those consequences are not confined to the homes of the victims and their families and friends. They will carry that trauma wherever they go. When serious incidents like Tumbler Ridge, the ripples run through workplaces, schools, volunteer organizations, and local businesses. The economic and emotional costs are felt not only by families, but by the entire community.

Balanced regulation does not inhibit innovation; rather, it fosters public trust and long-term sustainability in the technology sector. Furthermore, it supports parents in their efforts to limit

¹³ <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.0903620106>, <https://ics.uci.edu/~gmark/chi08-mark.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9778816/>

¹⁵ <https://raybwilliams.medium.com/the-digital-disconnect-how-screen-time-threatens-childrens-emotional-intelligence-efcf78e1ddb9>, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40894-024-00245-z>

¹⁶ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/job.70011>

their children's access to these addictive online tools. Healthy communities are foundational to economic stability and growth. Unregulated access to powerful digital platforms by minors contributes to social instability, mental health pressures, and public safety risks that affect families, employers, schools, and local governments. Canadian businesses stand to benefit from clear regulatory standards, predictable compliance frameworks, and increased public trust in digital systems.

Protecting children under the age of 16 and ensuring responsible platform accountability represents an important, forward-looking public policy approach that aligns economic strength with community well-being.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial and Federal Governments:

1. Enact legislation prohibiting Canadians under the age of 16 from accessing social media platforms and generative AI tools.
2. Require technology companies to implement secure, privacy-compliant age verification systems to enforce minimum age requirements.
3. Require platforms to report to appropriate Canadian law enforcement authorities any credible threats of violence, criminal activity, exploitation, or other dangerous conduct involving users over the age of 16 when such conduct results in suspension or removal from the platform.
4. Establish meaningful and proportionate financial penalties or operational restrictions for companies that fail to comply with age verification and reporting requirements.
5. Invest in education programs that support youth, parents, educators, employers and employees in understanding the safe use of online technology.

Submitted by the Tumbler Ridge and Prince George Chambers of Commerce

Supported by the Williams Lake Chamber of Commerce

KEEPING BC FORESTRY COMPETITIVE: IMPROVING ACCESS TO WOOD, JOBS, AND INVESTMENT

ISSUE

British Columbia's forest sector is a cornerstone of the provincial economy, supporting tens of thousands of family-sustaining jobs, hundreds of communities, and a diverse value chain from silviculture to

advanced manufacturing. Yet the sector is facing unprecedented pressure from rising costs, regulatory complexity, and constrained access to wood, and global market volatility.

Without timely action to improve access to economic wood and strengthen competitiveness, additional mill curtailments and closures are likely—impacting rural and First Nations communities, reducing public revenues, and undermining B.C.’s capacity to supply low-carbon building materials. The province requires a coordinated strategy to ensure forestry can continue to be a solution for housing, climate resilience, reconciliation, and economic growth.

BACKGROUND

Forestry remains one of British Columbia’s largest export industries and a critical employer in every region of the province. In 2022, B.C.’s forest sector contributed \$17.4B to provincial GDP, supported about 100,000 jobs (direct, indirect, and induced), delivered \$9.1B in annual wages, salaries and benefits, and generated \$6.6B in government revenues¹⁷. The forest sector also leads in Indigenous representation, with 4,800 Indigenous people directly employed in the sector¹⁸. Forest products are essential to addressing Canada’s housing shortage, replacing higher-carbon materials, and advancing a bioeconomy that utilizes more of every tree. They are a large share of provincial exports, representing roughly 20% of total merchandise exports by value¹⁹.

However, the operating environment has deteriorated significantly, and the sector is under sustained pressure. Softwood lumber production in the province has fallen by roughly 60% since 2016²⁰, and the province has seen more than 60 public announcements of mill curtailments and closures since 2023 with significant impacts on contractors, suppliers, local communities, and First Nations:

- Access to wood has become unpredictable. Lengthy and duplicative permitting processes delay harvesting approvals, leaving mills unable to plan production and workforce needs with confidence.
- Costs in B.C. exceed competing jurisdictions. Administrative burden, overlapping regulations, and escalating fees have reduced investment and eroded global competitiveness. Delivered wood costs in BC has outpaced all other North American jurisdictions with costs rising 77% since the year 2000.
- BC Timber Sales is not delivering as intended. The program was designed to provide a stable, market-based log supply, yet volumes and timing have become inconsistent, affecting companies throughout the forest value chain. They have consistently underperformed over the past several years, with the 2025 fiscal year recording harvest levels 40% below their rationalized apportionment²¹.

Table 1

¹⁷ [COFI Economic Impact Study \(2024\) – Executive Summary](#)

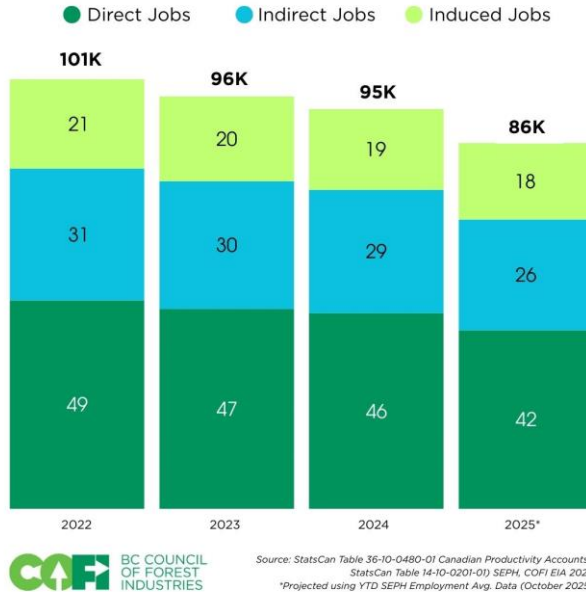
¹⁸ Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (2024)

¹⁹ [BC Stats International Commodity Exports Trade, BC Annual \(2024\)](#)

²⁰ [Statistics Canada Table 16-10-0017-01](#)

²¹ [BCTS FY2025 License Issued Public Report](#)

Decline in BC Forestry Jobs



The layering of these impacts has resulted in BC Forestry jobs (direct, indirect and induced) declining from 101k to 86k in the last four years.

At the same time, active forest management is increasingly important for wildfire risk reduction, ecosystem restoration, and climate adaptation. When logs cannot move from the forest to mills in a timely way, communities lose jobs, forests become more vulnerable to fire and decay, and opportunities for value-added manufacturing are missed.

A competitive and predictable forest sector is therefore not only an economic priority—it is central to community resilience, reconciliation, and environmental stewardship.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government, in partnership with the Federal Government and First Nations, take immediate steps to strengthen B.C.'s forest sector by:

1. Accelerate access to economic fibre by improving the efficiency of permit development processes, reducing administrative burden, and enhancing coordination across ministries so timber reaches mills in a timely way.
2. Improve cost structure by rationalizing cumulative regulatory, administrative, and fee-related pressures affecting harvesting and manufacturing, and ensuring new policies consider impacts on delivered wood costs and global competitiveness.
3. Deliver a reliable and competitive supply of logs through BC Timber Sales to support independent mills, contractors, and workers, with transparent volume targets and improved auction scheduling.

4. Provide First Nations with the capacity, tools, and revenue-sharing mechanisms needed to expedite referrals, participate in tenure and manufacturing opportunities, and advance shared economic and stewardship objectives.
5. Explicitly integrate active forest management as a tool for provincial climate adaptation and wildfire mitigation strategies. Proactive forest management tools such as fuel reduction, salvage, thinning, and prescribed burning support resilient working forests that both store carbon and reduce emissions.

Submitted by the Prince George Chamber of Commerce

Supported by the Quesnel, Williams Lake, Mackenzie, Smithers, Terrace, Vanderhoof, Chetwynd and Kitimat Chambers of Commerce