
SUMMARY

Dec. 2010

REVIEW OF FOREST SERVICE ROAD AND BRIDGE MAINTENANCE

The Ministry of Forests and Range requested an assessment of road safety, maintenance, and bridge replacement programs. The Office of the Comptroller General completed the audit in 2009 based on field work undertaken in 2008.

The objective was to evaluate whether the programs effectively reduce risk to public safety and the environment. Reviews such as this ensure that the province is aware of how well programs are being implemented and how these programs can be improved.

The review focused primarily on ministry activities on Non-Industrial Forest Service Roads and Non Status Roads. The ministry is responsible for many of the roads on Crown land that are no longer used for industrial activity. The number of these roads is increasing as the forestry, mining and energy industries scale back their operations. Furthermore, increased public use, the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic and climate change are increasing road maintenance needs. The result of this is that the ministry is incurring rising costs, resulting in financial pressures for the ministry.

Overall, the review found that the program provides an adequate framework to support the effective risk-based management of Non-Industrial Forest Service Roads. The key determinant of the program's effectiveness is the annual operating budget, which is allocated independently of identified high risk maintenance needs and may be reallocated, in part, to fund emergency maintenance needs arising during the year. Historically, operational funding has been limited and resulting in a requirement to prioritize maintenance activities to address high risks to public safety and the environment. The three-year capital funding initiated in 2009 will aid in strategic planning.

It was also noted that the program does not adequately address risks on the non status road network. Strategic planning supplemented with contingency funding would strengthen program activities.

The review also found that there is no government-wide framework, nor strategy, for management of all resource roads on Crown land. Multiple frameworks in the several ministries responsible for resource road management impede consistency and effective integration of activities prior to, during and after industrial use.

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