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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Are BC's natural resources "open for business" after cabinet reshuffle?

Vancouver. The lawyers at West Coast Environmental Law are concerned that BC's new Ministry of Natural Resource Operations will give industrial users ready access to the province's natural resources without ensuring environmental protection. The environmental organization argued that the new Ministry was being created to help industry get quick government approvals and that this could well compromise environmental protection.

In today's cabinet reorganization, the new Natural Resources Operations Ministry was given responsibility for issuing a wide range of licences, permits and approvals to resource users, while responsibility for ensuring that the resources are used appropriately and the environment is protected remains with other Ministries.

"This reorganization separates planning for the environment and natural resources from permitting. This new Ministry is responsible, for example, for giving companies permission to use water, and destroy heritage sites. But the responsibility for water use planning lies with the Ministry of Environment, and heritage conservation with the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Investment," pointed out Andrew Gage, Acting Executive Director with the organization.

"It may be convenient to industry to have one Ministry that can give them permission to use and consume BC's natural resources, but British Columbians need assurances that these resources will be managed in a responsible way that protects the environment." said Gage.

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