



## **NEWS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**

**May 26, 2015**

### ***The importance of managing sustainable natural resource development for economic growth***

VICTORIA - Auditor General of British Columbia Carol Bellringer has published two reports looking at the importance of managing natural resources as economic development pressures increase in B.C. The province's natural resources and environment are fundamental to our economy and our well-being. Government policy acknowledges the importance of protecting them.

The first report looks at government's management of cumulative effects, which are the impacts from development activity that add up over time causing changes to the environment. Managing cumulative effects is essential for ensuring that natural resource development is sustainable.

"The tension between the need to protect the environment and the need to grow our economy is well documented in the news," said Ms. Bellringer. "We acknowledge that efforts to consider and manage the cumulative effects of natural resource development remain a fledgling practice in Canada. But, managing cumulative effects will become even more complex than it already is as development pressures on the province's land continue to increase. It's in the interest of British Columbians to address cumulative effects management without delay."

The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources (the ministry) is undertaking work to support cumulative effects management, but more needs to be done. The ministry has developed a tool or assessment framework to support the management of cumulative effects, and to help B.C.'s natural resource ministries make informed decisions.

However, the framework will be phased in and not fully implemented until 2021. Decisions regarding natural resource development continue to be made without fully understanding the implications for the environment and the well-being of British Columbians. Government needs to provide direction so all of the natural resource ministries and agencies can jointly address cumulative effects.

The audit contains nine recommendations to encourage effective management of cumulative effects and to help government meet its expectation for sustainable natural resource development.

The second report is a followup from the Office's [2011 audit](http://www.bcauditor.com/pubs/2011/report4/audit-bc-environmental-assessment-office-EAO) (<http://www.bcauditor.com/pubs/2011/report4/audit-bc-environmental-assessment-office-EAO>) of the Environmental Assessment Office's (EAO) oversight of certified projects. Major projects such as mines or power plants must be considered for an environmental assessment prior to their development. This assessment weighs not only the potential environmental effects of the project, but its potential economic, social, heritage and health effects as well.



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The assessment found that the EAO has made progress implementing the Office of the Auditor General's six recommendations and improved its oversight of environmental assessment certificates since 2011.

“There are approximately 73 major projects in the environmental assessment process, potentially worth billions of dollars and with significant social, economic and environmental impacts to the province,” said Ms. Bellringer. “Improving the EAO's performance is important as government's focus on natural resource development increases.”

The reports are available on the [Office of the Auditor General website \(http://www.bcauditor.com/pubs\)](http://www.bcauditor.com/pubs).

Auditor General Carol Bellringer will answer questions pertaining to both reports via a teleconference.

Teleconference Date: May 26, 2015

Time: 11:30 a.m. (Pacific Time)

Dial-in Information:

From Vancouver: 604 681-0260

From elsewhere in Canada and the USA: 1 877 353-9184

Participant Pass Code: 44848#

During question and answer period, to ask a question: Press 01

During question and answer period, to exit the question queue: Press #

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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 (known as the Office of the Auditor General or OAG) to conduct audits, report findings and make recommendations.

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