



## News Release

For Immediate Release  
January 18, 2013

British Columbia's three regional Beetle Action Coalitions released a Discussion Paper today as part of their Rural BC Project. *The Pathway to Prosperity in British Columbia Runs Through Its Rural Places* is the final paper in the Rural BC Project series and makes recommendations to assist with rural economic development throughout the province.

The three regional Beetle Action Coalitions – the Omineca Beetle Action Coalition (OBAC), the Cariboo-Chilcotin Beetle Action Coalition (CCBAC) and the Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition (SIBAC) – are joint sponsors of the Rural BC Project, which aims to increase awareness of the issues faced by rural B.C., and to present constructive and non-partisan recommendations about what rural communities require to meet these challenges.

The paper released today, subtitled *A Long-Term Strategy for Rural Development*, recommends that rural communities, the Beetle Action Coalitions, First Nations, economic development organizations, regional development trusts and other stakeholders work in partnership with the provincial government to develop a new long-term strategy for social and economic development throughout rural B.C.

The paper sets out 20 recommendations, including the formation of a Leadership Group to partner with government to produce a long-term work plan based on shared principles, the establishment of an ongoing revenue stream to fund that plan and deliver services, and the designation of a cabinet minister with responsibility for rural issues. Until such a ministerial authority exists, the paper recommends that the development of the long-term strategy should be supported through the Premier's Office.

"As rural community leaders, we know we are facing both challenges and opportunities," OBAC Chair Stephanie Killam said. "We look forward to working with the provincial government and other organizations to explore how best to implement the recommendations of the Rural BC Project."

"The Rural BC Project recommendations are based on extensive background research conducted not only by the Beetle Action Coalitions, but also by organizations such as the B.C.

Progress Board and the Premier's Communities Opportunities Task Force," CCBAC Chair Kerry Cook said.

"While some rural communities are currently doing well, others continue to struggle economically," said SIBAC vice-chair Grace McGregor. "The purpose of the Rural BC Project is to identify what these struggling communities need to succeed."

The three regional Beetle Action Coalitions will now meet with the provincial government and other organizations to discuss the Rural BC Project findings and recommendations as outlined in this new discussion paper.

"We thank the three Beetle Action Coalitions for their work to date and look forward to working together to strengthen rural communities," Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Minister Responsible for Labour Pat Bell said. "Our government agrees that local communities and First Nations must be involved in facilitating rural and regional economic development and is working with communities and regions throughout the province to encourage economic growth and diversification."

"Rural B.C. is extremely important to this government and I look forward to future discussions with the Beetle Action Coalitions on ways to bolster rural economic development in B.C.," said Donna Barnett, Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Development.

More information on the Rural BC Project is available at:

<http://www.ominecoalition.ca/Strategies/RuralBCProject/index.html>

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