
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2015FLNR0030-000309
March 11, 2015

Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource
Operations

Rural Advisory Council members announced

VICTORIA – Members of the Province’s new Rural Advisory Council were announced today by Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Minister Steve Thomson and Parliamentary Secretary Donna Barnett.

The 14 individuals come from different areas of the province. The mandate of the council is to provide input to government policy decisions to best support thriving rural communities, while keeping in mind government’s need to control spending and ensure an overall balanced budget for the Province.

The initial focus for the council will be to provide advice on rural economic development, including rural access to capital and business development support for rural entrepreneurs and businesses. The council will also advise on rural community capacity building, including the Rural Dividend.

Members are expected to meet on a quarterly basis, with the first meeting being held March 26-27, 2015, in Victoria. The council will be chaired by Parliamentary Secretary Donna Barnett, with a co-chair to be selected at the first meeting.

In September 2014, government released its report entitled Supporting Rural Development: Creating a Voice for Rural British Columbia. In the report, the Province committed to forming a Rural Advisory Council.

Quotes:

Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Steve Thomson –

“There are promising economic opportunities on the horizon for British Columbia and we want to ensure that small and rural communities share fully in the benefits.”

Parliamentary Secretary Donna Barnett –

“We have accomplished good things for small communities – and rural B.C. – by working together. There is a lot to be said in favour of taking a collaborative approach, and the Rural Advisory Council will be helpful in that endeavour.”

Quick Facts:

- Applications for council members were accepted between Dec. 12, 2014, and Jan. 9, 2015.
- The 14 Rural Advisory Council members were selected from among 87 applicants.

Learn More:

To learn more about the Rural Advisory Council:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=53BE23E840F84C3D8B46E7E05862D661>

A backgrounder with biographies of council members follows.

Media Contact:

Greig Bethel

Media Relations

Ministry of Forests, Lands and

Natural Resource Operations

250 356-5261

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BACKGROUND

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Members of the Rural Advisory Council

Debra Arnot, Cache Creek:

Arnot is the general manager of Community Futures Sun Country and for the past nine years, has co-owned and operated a logging company with her husband. She has experience working with local government and has a strong passion for enhancing economic development in rural communities.

Susan Clovechok, Fairmont Hot Springs:

Clovechok is the executive director of the Columbia Valley Chamber of Commerce. With over 25 years in business, she has a wide range of experience in sales, customer service, and quality and operational management. She wants rural communities to be economically diverse and sustainable, while providing residents the lifestyle that attracted them to their chosen community in the first place.

Geri Collins, Kamloops:

Collins is director of operations for the Community Futures Development Corporation of Central Interior First Nations. She and her husband owned and operated a successful construction business. They also raise cattle as a family venture. Collins has been a member of the Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition since its inception and is a member of the TK'emlúps te Secwépemc (Kamloops) Band.

Tom Hoffman, Williams Lake:

Hoffman is a Registered Professional Forester and a board member of Community Futures Cariboo-Chilcotin and the Northern Development Initiative Trust. He believes that rural B.C. has a long and proud tradition in resource development, including innovation to expand economic benefits.

Bill Holmberg, Houston:

Holmberg has over 20 years' experience in business and is currently a manager of a heavy-duty equipment business in Houston. Having spent two terms as the mayor of Houston, he is able to bring a local government perspective (from a rural standpoint) to the committee.

Chief Roy Jones Jr., Skidegate:

As a commercial fisherman, Jones has interacted with almost all of B.C.'s coastal communities. He has also been on the Native Brotherhood of B.C. general executive for 23 years. He is a hereditary chief on the Council of the Haida Nation and spends his time encouraging young people to continue their education and pursue business opportunities.

Sue Kenny, Dawson Creek:

Kenny is the general manager of Community Futures Peace Liard and the executive director of

the Northeast Regional Community Foundation. Living in Northern B.C. makes her well aware of the challenges that are faced by rural communities. As a former city councillor in Dawson Creek, she's had an opportunity to build relationships with businesses and stakeholders alike.

Jonathan Lok, Port McNeill:

Lok is a Registered Forest Technician with over 20 years' experience in the forest sector and he is a managing partner in a consulting firm. He brings his experience in facilitation, project management, communications and leadership to the Rural Advisory Council.

Grace McGregor, Christina Lake:

Previously the owner of a small business, McGregor is now chair of the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary, vice-chair of the Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition and is engaged in many other community organizations. Her keen interest in rural B.C. began seven years ago when she attended the Reversing the Tide Conference in Prince George. Following subsequent meetings, McGregor and others put together a paper entitled "What rural B.C. needs to survive".

David Pernarowski, Terrace:

Pernarowski is a former mayor of Terrace and currently works as an account manager at a firm in Terrace. His current role allows him to work with First Nations, community stakeholders and municipal government. Part of this work is to help clients improve business development and client services. Based on his past experience, he brings a clear perspective on stakeholder relations from a rural B.C. standpoint.

Chris Pieper, Armstrong:

Pieper is the current mayor of Armstrong with over 20 years in local government. Previously, he worked in the forest sector and as a consultant. He believes strongly in the value of rural communities and feels that support and opportunities must be enhanced to allow for maximum growth.

Sylvia Pranger, Agassiz:

Pranger has previous local government experience both as a councillor and as mayor. She is an active volunteer in her community and appreciates the contributions that rural communities make to B.C. She wants to be a voice at the table to make sure that rural issues are heard.

Gerry Thiessen, Vanderhoof:

Thiessen is the mayor of Vanderhoof, vice-chair of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako and vice-chair of the Omineca Beetle Action Coalition. He also owned a cattle operation. His vision for rural B.C. is to make sure the residents are healthy and educated and stay in their community to make it economically sustainable.

Eric (Rick) Thompson, McBride:

Thompson is a retired district administrator for School District 57 and a former school principal. He is currently the successful owner/operator of three small businesses in McBride. He has vast experience working in education and regional government. Having seen success with small businesses in a rural setting, he is sure that the council will be able to increase those opportunities in other communities.

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