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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

### **BROWNFIELD RENEWAL CREATES GREENER B.C. COMMUNITIES**

VICTORIA – Agriculture and Lands Minister Pat Bell today outlined an innovative solution to revitalize abandoned and underutilized lands known as brownfields so that British Columbians can get the most value out of the land in their communities.

“A \$10-million remediation fund will be established to create green opportunities for communities as they revitalize inactive or unused lands. These funds will allow the redevelopment of both Crown and private sites,” said Bell. “Our goal is to strongly support projects that create efficient, revitalized, green communities that are sustainable for future generations.”

Bell announced the strategy at Dockside Green, a new Victoria housing development that is a prime example of brownfield revitalization.

Effective immediately, this strategy will:

- Fast-track green developments waiting for provincial environmental approvals, as outlined in the throne speech.
- Implement a \$10-million fund built up over five years that will match provincial and private sector investment in the early stages of investigations on sites where market forces have not achieved redevelopment and where it is possible to achieve triple-bottom-line outcomes that have social, economic and environmental benefits.
- Broaden brownfield tools for local governments, linking brownfield renewal with government’s proposed Green Communities Initiative to ensure brownfield opportunities can be a part of community revitalization. This will include allowing communities to vary development costs for projects that demonstrate triple-bottom-line benefits.

The Province is also:

- Creating tax incentives and disincentives to attract more investment in brownfield projects and to dissuade owners from keeping brownfield properties idle.
- Providing municipal staff involved in redevelopment projects with direct expert assistance on a project-by-project basis.
- Providing enhanced flexibility in liability allocation so that brownfield owners will be encouraged to either sell or redevelop idle properties.
- Developing a virtual brownfield office, a hands-on partnership between the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and the Ministry of Environment, to assist local governments with brownfield renewal by providing information and guidance.
- Developing a post-secondary program that offers a certificate of brownfield entrepreneurship.
- Facilitating the return of Crown owned brownfield sites to productive use.

“The new Brownfield Renewal Strategy will turn abandoned brownfield sites throughout British Columbia into assets that can be redeveloped or sold, instead of allowing them to remain as liabilities,” said Environment Minister Barry Penner, who was at Dockside Green for the announcement. “This becomes a win-win situation for everyone – the new owner, the old owner, the neighbourhood, and city hall.”

Brownfields are abandoned, vacant, derelict, or underutilized commercial and industrial properties where past actions have resulted in actual or perceived contamination. They are different from other contaminated sites in that they hold active potential for redevelopment. Progress has already been made on three pilot brownfield projects at Ladysmith Harbour, New Westminster Gasworks and Millstream Meadows (District of Highlands).

“At a time with increased pressure on lands, we are glad to see government taking steps to make more productive use of brownfields, especially in urban areas,” said Maureen Enser, executive director of the Urban Development Institute. “The approach government is taking by streamlining processes and reducing uncertainty is welcomed by industry and very timely.”

Redevelopment of brownfield sites helps to reduce development pressure on farm and forested land, reduce urban sprawl, improve public and environmental health and safety, increase land values, revitalize communities and renew derelict and underutilized land. The Province is looking at ways to assist developments that emphasize triple-bottom-line outcomes.

“The Province's brownfield strategy will help promote environmental restoration and economic revitalization throughout B.C.'s communities,” said Susan Gimse, president of the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). “We look forward to working with the Province on developing and rolling out the strategy in the coming months.”

The Province is consulting with a wide range of stakeholders on the strategy and will hold its first consultation meeting on March 26 in Vancouver. Representation will come from the development community, UBCM, the Urban Development Institute and the ministries of Agriculture and Lands, Community Services, Environment, Finance and Advanced Education.

Green community developments like Dockside Green are good examples of the kinds of projects that the Province is encouraging. Green communities improve the environmental conditions of sites that may be contaminated from past use and incorporate more environmentally sustainable features into their design to minimize impacts for the future.

Since 2001, the Province has committed more than \$257 million to identify and clean up a number of B.C. Crown contaminated sites. There are now 59 sites across the province being managed under the Crown Contaminated Sites Program. For the 08/09 fiscal year, the Province has earmarked an additional \$25 million that is available for the remediation of Crown contaminated sites as well as Crown brownfields.

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