B.C.'s commitment to water sustainability

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By Mary Polak, Minister of Environment

Modernizing
B.C.'s Water Act was a key commitment in our government's election platform. Premier Christy Clark has directed me to complete consultation with British Columbians on a proposed new Water Sustainability Act with the intention of passing new legislation in 2014. The new act will update and replace the existing Water Act, respond to current and future pressures on water and position B.C. as a leader in water stewardship.

We
started working on the proposed new act in 2009 and have engaged widely with British Columbians. In the more than 2,200 written submissions, individual citizens, First Nations organizations and stakeholder groups shared their ideas and pride for their rivers, lakes, streams and watersheds. Government has reviewed this input carefully and continues to refine the legislative proposals, seeks to better understand sector concerns and works out the details of how the new act will be implemented.

We recognize one of the greatest weaknesses of the
existing Water Act is that groundwater - with a few exceptions - is not currently regulated in B.C. As such, the Province does not license or charge for withdrawing groundwater. This is why regulating groundwater use will be a key component of the new Water Sustainability Act.

I
would also like to acknowledge that First Nations in B.C. bring a unique perspective due to strong cultural, ecological and economic interests in water. The B.C. government will continue to engage First Nations as we refine and implement the proposed Water Sustainability Act. My predecessors and I have met with members of the First Nations Leadership Council and I plan to meet with them again later this fall.

I
continue to be impressed by the strong interest British Columbians have taken in their water resources. What government does is only part of the solution. All British Columbians are challenged to play their part to protect, preserve and conserve our water. I look forward to introducing the new Water Sustainability Act in the legislature in 2014.

For more information: Water Sustainability Act

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