

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Budget fails to invest in British Columbia's future

Victoria, March 3, 2010 – Yesterday's budget announcement failed to make the necessary investments in public services that are key to economic development and innovation in BC.

Despite predictions that B.C.'s economic recovery will be led by mining and other resource industries, Finance Minister Colin Hansen reported cuts of \$320 million to programs and staffing in B.C.'s key resource ministries: Forests and Range; Agriculture and Lands; Community and Rural Development; Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources; and Transportation and Infrastructure.

"Hansen told us in his budget speech that mining, forestry, and oil and gas are all essential to the health of our economy" says Jodi Jensen, Executive Director of the Professional Employees Association, "yet we see cuts in the public services supporting and regulating those industries."

The Ministry of Forests and Range will be particularly hard-hit and forced to cut programs such as research, stewardship and compliance and enforcement, which are key to the industry's recovery and to effective management of public resources. The ministry's projected staffing reductions come on the heels of two rounds of layoffs announced in September and January.

Yesterday's budget targets the elimination of a further 4,000 positions from the public service by 2012/2013. "We don't expect the government can achieve these targets through employee retirements and attrition alone," says Jensen. "Further layoffs now are short-sighted when government knows its ability to deliver services to British Columbians in the future depends on its success as a competitive employer, on its ability to recruit and retain skilled professionals."

The Professional Employees Association is an independent union representing 1,400 licensed professionals in B.C.'s public service, including Mines Inspectors, Forest Research Scientists, Bridge Engineers, Wildlife Veterinarians, and Petroleum Geologists.

- 30 -

For more information, please contact:

Kyle Russell
Communications Officer
Professional Employees Association
250.385.8791