



**\*\* DRAFT FOR ISSUE IDENTIFICATION & DISCUSSION \*\***

# BRIEFING NOTE: Organizing Government for Success POLIS Thoughts on FLNRORD Re-Organization

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## 1. BRIEFING NOTE PURPOSE & SUMMARY

### **Introduction and Briefing Note Purpose**

The current government has committed to reviewing the role of the current FLNRORD and is seriously considering splitting the role into two ministries:

- Forests
- Lands and Natural Resource Operations (LNRO)

Minister of State Cullen is mandated to lead this review and potential restructuring. This Brief provides context for upcoming decisions about how government can best conduct the FLNRORD restructuring. It outlines information for individuals and groups who will be meeting with Minister of State Cullen and the LNRO Secretariat on the possible roles for the new ministry and the overall reorganization.<sup>1</sup>

### **Background and Problem Statement**

This government after the recent election has introduced a number of new initiatives and made many new commitments for natural resource management under its new mandate.

Forest Lands Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) is chronically under-resourced (including gaps in staff capacities) to implement the new mandate and policies.

With the challenges facing government as a whole, FLNRORD currently lacks adequate staff cohort and budget AND skills and capacity for modernized sustainable and integrated resource management, planning and governance.

The current Ministry is also not yet internally well-aligned to execute existing mandate priorities, plan effectively across the landscape, and engage with the range of stakeholders and Indigenous nations under the new UNDRIP/DRIPA requirements.

#### **Problem Summary**

As currently constructed FLNRORD is too large, too unwieldy and unable to effectively and systematically respond to emerging opportunities or address persistent challenges while advancing the clearly identified government priorities of sustainable economic development, stewardship of natural resources and support meaningful and ongoing reconciliation.

### **Summary of Challenges Facing FLNRORD Re-Organization**

1. Creating a new collaborative, shared decision-making process for all resource based statutory decisions in accordance with UNDRIP principles.
2. Accessing new financial and staff resources both from the federal and provincial governments to implement new activities contained in mandate letters on natural resource management and sustainability of the landscape.
3. Implementing a staff capacity building program to enable all staff to be more strategic, purposeful, and effective for delivering integrated solutions across the three goals for natural resource stewardship.

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<sup>1</sup> The Secretariat has posed three questions to guide the sessions with the Minister: 1. What is working with your interactions with FLNRORD and natural resource sector ministries? 2. What are the main challenges facing your organization with the government's natural resource sector ministries? 3. If you could change one thing, what would it be and why?

## 2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT (WHAT WE CURRENTLY KNOW)

### Past Restructuring

Government has an extensive history of Ministry restructuring around natural resource management:

- In the mid 1990's, it created the Land Use Coordination Office to support completion of 26 Land and Resource Management Plans
- In 2001, it created the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management by include all resource planning and information systems into a single ministry.
- In 2010, it created the Ministry of Natural Resource Operations with Front Counter BC as a single portal for all land and resource authorizations. It also implemented the concept of 'one land manager' where the single ministry issues all natural resource permits and licenses with the exception of oil and gas.
- In 2013, it created the Ministry of Forest Lands and Natural Resource Operations as the primary natural resource agency in government and added Rural Development in 2017.

### New Mandate

The three principal goals of this government for natural resource management are:

1. Economic recovery
2. Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples
3. Environmental sustainability

The new government issued ministerial mandate letters in November 2020. The potential new LNRO could likely be responsible for both advising on policies shaping these mandates and for their implementation in the regions. The set of deliverables for LNRO based on mandate letters now includes:

- coastal strategy
- modernized land use planning
- watershed security strategy and fund (perhaps as an extension of the current Healthy Watersheds Initiative, part of the COVID stimulus and recovery plan);
- agreements for conservation, wildlife strategy and species at risk;
- old growth strategy implementation;
- climate adaptation and preparedness strategy including carbon stewardship;
- collaborative stewardship forums and shared decision making agreements under DRIPA; and,
- maintaining healthy salmon populations and habitats.

### Possible Operating Principles for LNRO

The LNRO Secretariat has proposed a number of operating principles, which guide the form and function of LNRO.

- Accountability
- Adaptability
- Integration
- Inclusivity
- Innovation
- Regional Presence
- Service Orientation

### **Ongoing challenges and new realities facing current Ministry and new arrangement**

The potential for re-organization creates an opportunity for a more effective model for advancing Indigenous reconciliation together with achieving a balance between the two other goals of economic opportunity and environmental stewardship.

This approach will require a shift from the present transactional and operational focused approach to one of shared decision-making, informed consent, and collaboration with Indigenous nations.

It will also require a shift from a fragmented approach to a more integrated model for land-water and resources at the strategic and landscape levels.

The Ministry is also not yet well-aligned to execute mandate priorities, plan effectively on the landscape, and engage with a range of stakeholders and Indigenous nations under the new UNDRIP/DRIPA requirements.

This more integrated approach will require more staff and financial resources and FLNRORD is currently chronically under-resourced to implement the new mandate and policies.

As currently constructed FLNRORD is too large, too unwieldy and unable to effectively integrate and execute priorities including sustainable economic development, stewardship of natural resources and support reconciliation.

## **3. WHAT WE CURRENTLY SUSPECT**

### **New Ministry Functions**

The goals of the reorganization are to make the ministry(s) more manageable and ensure better implementation of political priorities and broader strategic policy development and implementation by the bureaucracy.

The core business of LNRO is to advance the three goals – economic recovery; reconciliation with Indigenous people; and environmental sustainability. The LNRO Ministry will likely have two main functions:

1. Coordinated authorizations across the natural resource base.
2. Input to developing strategic policies and policies and implementation of set of deliverables for the new mandate listed above.

### **Likely Core Delivery Mechanisms**

- Land use planning tables and adaptive management
- Government to Government agreements
- Collaborative stewardship forums / shared decision-making agreements (per DRIPA)
- Canada/BC Nature Agreements

### **Core Problems the New Ministry Needs to Solve**

- Aligning land use policies with reconciliation and balancing economic and environmental goals. See for example conflicts in old growth strategy between protection of old growth areas and sustaining employment in resource communities.
- Deploying modernized land use planning for certainty to resource development.
- Maintaining public and community confidence and engagement while pursuing a G2G (shared decision making) approach.
- Addressing lack of staff resources, capacity and skills in the public service to deliver all mandate tasks.
- De-siloing: land use policies are managed by both HQ policy units and Regional Offices, leading to confusion, poor communication and potentially approaching local partners and Indigenous governments multiple times by different staff.
- Addressing the inability to predict climate change on the land base at the landscape /watershed scale.
- Dealing with increased constraints on the land and resource base making finding a consensus more challenging.
- Working in climate of low public trust in Provincial decisions especially around forests and caribou strategy.

## **4. WHAT IS (AND IS NOT) WORKING**

### **What is Working**

- Coordinating all resource authorizations in one ministry to improve response times, consult with Indigenous nations and consider cumulative impacts.
- Initial integration in land use planning and collaborative stewardship forums.
- Preliminary efforts for integrated data and information systems to support decision making on natural resources.
- Government engagement in pilot planning (and shared decision making) projects with Indigenous partners to test out new approaches and areas of possible collaboration.

### **What is Not Working and What We Think Needs to Happen**

#### **Possible solutions and desired outcomes from new Ministry**

- Integrate decisions based on risk analysis and local priorities (understanding trade-offs) between economy and environment and reconciliation rather than either/ or proposals.
- Shift from transactional negotiations with Indigenous nations to collaborative stewardship forums and more G2G tables with shared decision making agreements.<sup>3</sup>
- Use modernized land (and water) use and landscape plans to set government objectives (legal objectives) on the land and waters to increase certainty for communities and participants.
- Gain support of the federal government to fund conservation and nature agreements including Watershed Security Fund, reconciliation tables and carbon storage strategies.
- Build capacity and training for all staff to deliver collaborative and integrated activities (see, for example, proposed program in Appendix A).
- Develop trust across the public for land use plans and outcomes by, for example, creative effective

transition and adjustment options, ensuring implementation and legal backstops (e.g. objectives and enforcement) and improving local communications.

- Create a robust framework for monitoring and compliance in keeping with basic adaptive management principles and resiliency.
- Continue to invest in Indigenous capacity building and ensure they are coordinated between HQ and Regions.

## 5. HOW WATERSHED SECURITY FITS IN

While Watershed Security is not only a priority from the POLIS perspective,<sup>2</sup> it also offers an effective land use planning and management approach to help implement an integrated resource management (and governance) approach.

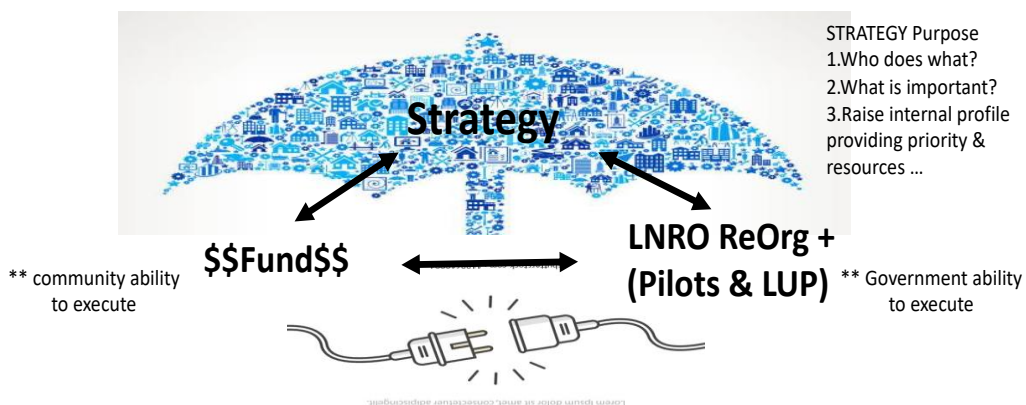
Watershed Security is an emerging priority for communities and many Indigenous nations and offers a good opportunity to link key themes and as a way to organize priority planning (and resource management) on the landscape

(see image to show relationship between mandated Security Strategy and Fund and how it relates to the potential reorganization and land use planning in pilots and other priority areas).

### Bottom line ...

*Watershed Security – a focused priority for communities, water leaders, funders and government !!*

**Strategy + Fund = Opportunity & Security**



<sup>2</sup> Watershed Security Agenda <https://poliswaterproject.org/polis-research-publication/watershed-security-agenda/> and Towards Watershed Security: The role of water in modernized land use planning in B.C. <https://poliswaterproject.org/polis-research-publication/towards-watershed-security/>

Possible water-specific priorities include

- Rebuild and bundle the essential strategy aspects in water (science, planning, governance) – under one roof (with dedicated ADM)
- Bring a clear watershed security lens to all aspects of resource management and land use, including in planning and development decisions (in a decentralized model)
- Provide guidance and requirements for watershed assessments & regular State of the Watershed reporting to support evidence-based decision making
- Provide clear focus around water and watersheds including capacity, legislative framework and lines of accountability through Watershed Security Strategy that supports and embeds the LNRO reorganization
- Provide community and Indigenous nations with resources and capacity through the Watershed Security Fund as a complement to the linked Strategy (plug and socket) to support LNRO land (and water) use planning (and watershed governance pilots) and activities in regions and in communities.

## 6. CONCLUDING COMMENTARY

To address the various emerging challenges of sustainable resource management and planning in BC going forward requires government to organize itself in a more nimble, efficient and locally responsive way.

Ultimately, this reorganization will require shifting priorities from a primarily operational (transactional) approach focused on individual sector (piecemeal) permitting to a new Ministry more explicitly focused on shared decision making and advancing reconciliation that manages the whole land base and landscape with multiple values (carbon sequestration, maintaining biodiversity, ensuring sufficient clean water and healthy functioning watersheds) to ensure long term economic growth and ecological sustainability.

The end goals must be a sustainable resource management Ministry that can:

- actively integrate functions<sup>3</sup> and activities<sup>4</sup> across the landscape:
- work with communities and Indigenous nations to make locally and provincially relevant decisions; and,
- breakdown silos across various dedicated or related government Ministries.

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<sup>3</sup>Landscape/watershed level planning, data management (and forecasting), negotiation and process support, enable shared decision making, “conciierge” for permitting/approvals (both with Crown and Indigenous governments), finding sustainable resourcing etc.

<sup>4</sup>Development, stewardship, protected spaces, restoration

## APPENDIX: NORTH AREA CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM



# North Area Capacity Building Program



### BUILDING STRATEGIC CAPACITY IN OUR PEOPLE

Sustainable natural resource management is increasingly challenging and complex. The impacts of climate change, economic shifts, and Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples are all contributing to expectations for transformative solutions that are collaboratively developed and implemented.

The Capacity Building Program is about investing in our people by setting them up for success with the right skills, knowledge, competencies, and experience needed for the future of complex, multi-party natural resource management.

### WHAT IS THE CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM?

The Capacity Building Program is an initiative to help staff be more strategic, purposeful, and effective with the time they are allocating to professional development.

It is a dedicated program to support the realization of staff's development goals through experiential learning opportunities, formal training, peer support and coaching, and mentorship relationships.

### IS THIS PROGRAM FOR ME?

The Capacity Building Program is a professional development path for North Area FNLNR staff who currently work or have career aspirations to work directly with partners and interest holders to resolve complex resource management issues.

Interested participants should review the program curriculum and talk with their supervisor about how it can help them achieve their professional development goals. Applicants will need to create a development plan aligning their learning goals with the Capacity Building Program curriculum. This includes choosing the focal area(s) of interest and identifying appropriate experiential learning opportunities.