



## Fraser Basin Council

**For Immediate Release** - January 24, 2003

### **State of the Fraser Basin Report Released: How healthy is the Fraser River Basin?**

Vancouver, BC: Fraser Basin Council Chair Jack Blaney today released the groundbreaking ***State of the Fraser Basin Report: A Snapshot on Sustainability***. The report is the focus of a three-day conference taking place in Richmond, BC that brings together community and environmental organizations, business and industry, and four orders of government to look at the state of the Fraser Basin and develop an action plan for the Basin's future sustainability.

"The Report is the equivalent of a medical check-up for the Fraser River Basin, a California-size region of British Columbia that stretches from the Rockies to Richmond and is home to two out of three British Columbians," Blaney said.

"The good news is that, in many ways, we are doing fairly well. We're living longer. Water quality has generally improved throughout the Basin. Far more people have a university education than ever before. The so-called services sector – which includes high tech and other clean industries – is now the largest employer in all regions of the Basin. In addition, about half the salmon stocks in the Basin are increasing."

However, Blaney added that the Basin has some major challenges, including some urgent ones that need to be addressed immediately.

"There are far more 'boil water' advisories in some parts of the Basin than 20 years ago, and more people are developing respiratory illnesses, perhaps related to poor air quality," noted Blaney. "Child obesity has skyrocketed. Less of us are volunteering or voting, and we're giving less to charity. For 20 per cent of the population, housing is inadequate or too expensive. The Mountain Pine Beetle is devastating forests throughout the Interior. 'Noxious' weeds – or non-native plant species – are taking over large tracks of agricultural land. Progress on settling First Nations land claims is slow, and half of our salmon stocks are declining.

"This *Snapshot on Sustainability* gives us a broad picture of where we stand today, and how we can create a sustainable future."

Blaney concluded that "courageous leadership" is key to the Basin's sustainability.

"What we need is leadership that is collaborative, courageous, compelling and committed to producing results," the former SFU president said. "British Columbians want decisions that will leave both a clean environment *and* a healthy economy for future generations, because both are needed for enduring prosperity."

Home to 2.6 million people, the Fraser Basin covers one quarter of BC, accounts for 80 per cent of the province's economy and supports a diverse ecosystem. The Fraser Basin Council brings people together to find solutions to long-standing issues and conflicts, and to help ensure that decisions about the Basin today will protect and advance its economic, environmental and social sustainability into the future.

**For more information, or to order a copy of the Report, visit our website ([www.fraserbasin.bc.ca](http://www.fraserbasin.bc.ca)) or call: 604-488-5350.**

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***Social well-being supported by a vibrant economy and sustained by a healthy environment***