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Ministry of Employment and Investment

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**MILLER APPLAUDS DECISION TO PROCEED WITH NEXT STAGE OF
COAL MINE DEVELOPMENT**

VICTORIA—The decision to proceed to the next stage in development of a new coal mine at Willow Creek is positive economic news for northern workers and communities in B.C., Employment and Investment Minister Dan Miller said today.

“This project could mean a \$20-million investment in B.C.’s coal industry and the creation of up to 120 direct new jobs,” said Miller. “This is welcome news for northern B.C., not only in the Chetwynd area, but in Prince Rupert which is one of the contending terminals for shipping the coal to Asian markets.

“Our government’s priority is the creation of long-term, decent-paying jobs for workers in all regions of British Columbia. Through Jobs for BC, we are actively pursuing partnerships, such as this one between BC Rail and the private sector, which helps us achieve that goal,” said Miller, minister responsible for BC Rail.

The mine is a joint venture between partners Mitsui Matsushima Canada, BCR Ventures Inc. and Globaltex Industries Inc. and will be operated by Pine Valley Coal Ltd.

A recently completed feasibility study estimated open pit coal reserves of 15.6 million tonnes and indicated resources of at least 33 million tonnes. Initial mine production is expected to be 600,000 tonnes per year, rising up to 900,000 tonnes in subsequent years. Assuming all mine development review and regulatory approvals are obtained, plans are for the mine to begin construction by May 1998, with production starting in the fall.

“We are pleased to see new investment in B.C.’s northeastern coal industry,” said Miller. “The coal potentially flowing from this new mine will expand B.C.’s participation in world coal markets, particularly those of Japan and the Asia Pacific.”

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- 2 -

The next phase of the project will see Mitsui working to secure and formalize coal sales contracts. At the same time, Pine Valley Coal is going ahead with detailed engineering and design plans for the plant and coal handling facilities and is submitting its project report to the Environmental Assessment Office to initiate the formal review process.

- 30 -

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