

# AN UPDATE ON THE CUTBACKS IN GOVERNMENT LICENSED SCIENCE OFFICERS

March 2015

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BC's Union for Professionals



## OVERVIEW

The Professional Employees Association is a labour union representing approximately 2,500 British Columbia professionals in nine chapters. One of its chapters is for Government Licensed Science Officers employed by the provincial government.

Government Licensed Science Officers include foresters, engineers, agrologists, geoscientists, veterinarians, psychologists, physiotherapists and pharmacists. They provide the provincial government with advice, guidance, research, monitoring and review services to help ensure the efficient and effective management, utilization and oversight of B.C.'s natural resources, infrastructure, food and water resources and some aspects of health care services.

A year ago, [a report](#) issued warnings over the steady decline of licensed science officers employed by the provincial government. A year later, further cuts continue to erode the number of science officers entrusted to keep British Columbia's most valuable natural resources sustainable and safe.

In the last year the province has cut the total number of science officers by 4 per cent. This is compounded by a 15 per cent cut over the previous 5 years.

Professionals in the Ministry of Environment were hit hardest. The province now employs 10 per cent fewer in this Ministry than it did only a year ago. In the aftermath of the Mount Polley disaster, an adequately staffed compliment of licensed science officers in the provincial government is critical to maintaining the safety of BC's natural resources.

Also concerning is the ongoing cuts to professional foresters employed by the BC Government. In only a year, reductions of 6 per cent were noted. The government takes in half a billion dollars annually from forestry and this revenue pays for public services. In addition, our forest product exports are worth close to \$10 billion annually and the total value of BC's timber supply is estimated to be a quarter of a trillion dollars. It makes sense to invest in the proper science to maintain this revenue stream and the biodiversity to make it sustainable.

## DECLINING NUMBERS

PROFESSION	2014	2015	CHANGE
Agrologist	149	143	-4%
Engineer	226	214	-5%
Forester	539	505	-6%
Geologist	31	35	+12%
Other	134	142	+5%
Petroleum Geologist	9	9	No change
Pharmacist	20	19	-5%
Psychologist	66	62	-6%
Vet	11	12	+9%
ALL	1185	1141	-4%

Data sourced from BC Government Union-Check Off Lists provided to the Professional Employees Association.

## CONCLUSION

Government Licensed Science Officers are professionally trained and accredited experts and scientists. They are the first-line stewards of B.C.'s natural resources and primary protectors of the safety of public infrastructure facilities. The PEA believes that the compounding decreases will substantially threaten the safety and stewardship of B.C.'s natural resources.