

British Columbia's Environmental Assessment Process

The provincial government is committed to more flexible, efficient and timely reviews of proposed major projects to help revitalize the provincial economy. This is why a new, streamlined environmental assessment process was introduced in 2002.

What are the requirements of the *Environmental Assessment Act*?

- Proposals for major projects require an environmental assessment review before the project can proceed.
- The assessment process considers the potential effects of proposed projects and ways to minimize or avoid adverse effects.
- A decision on whether the project should be approved is made by the Minister of Environment and the Minister designated as responsible for that category of project.

When would projects be subject to review under the *Environmental Assessment Act*?

- If the project is of a type and size as set out in the Reviewable Projects Regulation; or
- If the Minister of Environment designates the project as reviewable; or
- If the proponent applies to the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) for the project to be designated as reviewable.

How is the review conducted?

- By process set out by the EAO; or
- By a process determined by the Minister of Environment, for example by a panel or commission.

Key Elements of the Environmental Assessment Process

- Public consultation by the proponent.
- Opportunities for public input to the review.
- Opportunities for local government input to the review.
- First Nations consultation.
- Information and records relating to the assessment are available to the public at the EAO Project Information Centre, accessible through the Internet.
- Technical assessment by provincial, and where indicated, federal government agencies.

Summary of a Typical Environmental Assessment Process

- A proponent comes to the EAO with a proposal for a project.
- The EAO determines whether the project is reviewable and how the review should be conducted.
- EAO issues an order for the project review including:
 - what is to be assessed;
 - consultation requirements; and
 - the review process.
- Terms of reference that identify information requirements for an application for an environmental assessment certificate are usually developed by the proponent.
- In developing the terms of reference, the proponent:
 - consults with government agencies, First Nations, and the public to identify issues, impacts to be assessed, and types of mitigation needed;
 - may provide opportunities for public comments on draft terms of reference; and
 - gets final sign-off from the EAO.
- The proponent conducts studies and prepares an application in accordance with requirements in the terms of reference.
- The EAO accepts the application for review if it contains the information required by the terms of reference.
- Government agencies, First Nations, and the public are asked to review and comment on the application. There is usually a formal public comment period.
- The proponent is given the opportunity to address issues identified by government agencies, First Nations and the public.
- The findings of the review are documented in an assessment report prepared by the EAO.
- The assessment report is referred to two ministers for a decision on whether the project should be approved.
- If the project is approved, the proponent obtains any necessary permits and authorizations from permitting authorities (e.g. the Ministry of Environment).

Opportunities for the Public to be Involved

During the preapplication period:

- By participating in public meetings, open houses, and other public forums arranged by the proponent; and
- For some projects, the option exists to provide input on the proponent's draft terms of reference for an application for an environmental assessment certificate and submit comments (e.g. issues and concerns) to the proponent.

During the review of the application for an environmental assessment certificate:

- By participating in public meetings, open houses, and other public forums arranged by the proponent and/or the EAO; and
- By reviewing the application and submitting comments (e.g. issues and concerns) to the EAO, during a public comment period.

Information on the review process and documentation on the review of a particular project, including the proponent's application for an environmental assessment certificate, can be found at:

the Project Information Centre website: www.eao.gov.bc.ca

or the

Environmental Assessment Office

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