



NEWS RELEASE
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B.C.'s Prosperity Mine assessment seriously flawed: new study

(Smithers) A new independent report commissioned by the Smithers-based Northwest Institute (NWI) has found serious flaws in the provincial environmental assessment of Taseko Mines' proposed Prosperity Mine in B.C.'s west Chilcotin region.

Prosperity Mine was subject to separate BC and federal environmental reviews. The in-house B.C. process led to approval of the mine in January 2010, while an independent federal review panel process led to federal rejection of the mine in November 2010.

The report, written by environmental lawyer Mark Haddock, concludes that the BC Environmental Assessment Office's (EAO) recommendation to approve the mine was based on incomplete evidence and was the result of a hurried, flawed and less than objective process conducted by the agency.

"Having a single project run through two separate environmental assessments provided us with a unique opportunity to compare the two processes," said NWI Executive Director Pat Moss. "Environmental assessments are supposed to be neutral, objective fact-finding exercises to inform decision-makers about proposed development. In the Prosperity case, people have to ask themselves how two EA processes, examining the same project and with the same terms of reference, could produce such dramatically different results."

The NWI report found that:

- The evidentiary record used by the EAO was deficient because it did not wait to acquire complete information from sources such as federal scientists reviewing the project, and did not have the benefit of complete information obtained through a comprehensive, transparent public hearing process.
- The EAO missed or dismissed many impacts the federal panel found significant.
- In contrast to the federal process, the EAO lacks clear policies, guidelines, standards and criteria for addressing issues such as fish and wildlife (and their habitats) and mitigation and compensation for impacts. Key issues were typically

deferred to future planning efforts or highly subjective, weak findings were accepted.

- The EAO's process did not analyze cumulative effects on grizzly bears, which were documented by the federal panel.
- In contrast to the independent federal panel, the EAO's obvious avoidance of finding significant impacts raises questions about whether its reporting relationship to the provincial ministers affects its objectivity and neutrality.

"We don't know if the Prosperity assessment conducted by the EAO is typical of its project reviews," Moss stated, "but if it is, then the public and the government should be very concerned about the seemingly arbitrary outcomes of work done by this agency. It is not credible and the ministers should not have relied on it."

The report comes on the heels of a report from B.C.'s auditor general earlier this month that found the EAO's oversight isn't sufficient to avoid significant adverse impacts from some of the projects it has approved.

The NWI report is available on its website: www.northwestinstitute.ca

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