

**GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING A PROJECT DESCRIPTION
FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

This document contains guidelines for proponents preparing a project description for the provincial environmental assessment process. In most cases, the project description is the first formal document the proponent provides to the Environmental Assessment Office (the “EAO”) at the beginning of an environmental assessment review.

Purpose of a Project Description

The EAO uses the project description to determine whether the project, or a component of the project:

- (1) falls within a category of projects that is “reviewable” under the Reviewable Projects Regulation, and
- (2) meets the environmental assessment review threshold for that category.

If the answer to both (1) and (2) is yes, then the project qualifies as “reviewable” under the *Environmental Assessment Act* (the “Act”).

However, even though a project qualifies as “reviewable”, the EAO may not necessarily require the project to undergo an environmental assessment. To decide whether the project warrants an environmental assessment, the EAO determines whether the project:

“...may have a significant adverse environmental, economic, social, heritage or health effect, taking into account practical means of preventing or reducing to an acceptable level any potential adverse effects of the project...” (section 10 of the Act).

The project description is the basis for the EAO’s decision under section 10 of the Act as to whether to proceed with a review. Consequently, it is important that the project description contains sufficient information to permit such a determination to be made about the potential effects of the project. The proponent should discuss information requirements with the EAO if the project description relates to an application to voluntarily seek review under section 7 of the Act.

The EAO includes the project description on its website as the background material supporting a decision under the Act. (Examples of project descriptions submitted to the EAO in the past may be used for reference when preparing a new project description.) The EAO provides the project description to government agencies and First Nations to enable them to determine whether they are interested in participating in a project review and to initiate discussions on the scope of the environmental assessment.

As some projects may require both provincial and federal environmental assessment, when developing a project description, the EAO encourages proponents to consult the federal *Project Description Guide: British Columbia*. (This document is available on the Canadian

Environmental Assessment Agency website at:

http://www.ceaa.gc.ca/012/017/Project_Description_Guide_under_CEEA_BC_e.pdf)

Reviewing this document will help to highlight the federal government's information needs and to identify federal agencies that may have an interest in a project. Knowing the information needs at an early stage of the federal assessment process may avoid delays and should facilitate the harmonization of the provincial and federal environmental assessment processes, where appropriate.

Contents of a Project Description

For the purposes of an assessment under provincial legislation, a project description should provide a general overview of the following information:

Proponent Information

- The proponent's name and the representative managing the project.
- Contact information, including a mailing address, phone and fax numbers, and email addresses.
- Corporate information, including a website address, particulars of company incorporation, and partners' names (if applicable).

General Background Information

- The type and size of the project, with specific reference to the thresholds set out in the Reviewable Projects Regulation.
- Project purpose and rationale.
- Estimated capital cost.
- Number of construction jobs (in person years) and operating jobs (actual number).
- Location (latitude and longitude).

Project Overview

- A brief description of the major on-site and off-site project components, including options if the final site selections are not yet available.
- A conceptual site plan and map(s) at sufficient scale to allow for clear location of all major components of the project (proponents may wish to include photographs if these would be helpful to understanding the nature and location of the proposed project).
- The project's duration, including decommissioning if appropriate.
- The project's potential environmental, economic, social, heritage, and health effects (in general terms).

Land use setting

- A general description of existing land use in the vicinity of the project site.
- Whether the project and its components are situated on private or Crown land.
- Information about First Nations interests where asserted claims to rights or title are known.

Consultation Activities

- A summary of consultation activities that have been carried out with First Nations, the public and local governments.

Proposed Development Schedule

- A tentative schedule for submitting an application for an environmental assessment certificate and developing the project (should a certificate be issued).

Required Permits

- A list of required permits, if known.