



Reference: 316930

June 18, 2018

Major resource development and infrastructure projects are key components of British Columbia's economy, creating thousands of jobs, providing revenues for government services, and contributing to overall community and economic well-being for all British Columbians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike.

For major projects, Environmental Assessments (EAs) represent an important strategic decision point within the government's integrated regulatory framework that ensures proposed resource developments protect all aspects of the environment, including also health, economic, social and heritage values. Projects that receive an EA approval must also undergo additional government reviews, community and Indigenous engagement, and permitting decisions prior to proceeding. This comprehensive and rigorous regulatory process often takes many years and, in most cases, carries on throughout the entire life cycle of the project.

To ensure the public, communities, Indigenous peoples, industry, environmental organizations, and investors have confidence in EAs in British Columbia (BC), the process must be rigorous, timely and transparent to create the certainty required for effective decision-making. EAs must also be adaptable, to fit unique contexts and enable beneficial technological innovations, in order to promote continuous process improvement and increase the ability to engage with Indigenous peoples and all stakeholders.

EA revitalization provides an opportunity to modernize EA in BC, while building upon and codifying the robust and successful aspects of the current process that have evolved since BC first introduced its *Environmental Assessment Act* in 1996. BC's revitalized EA process will protect the environment and community interests, while offering clear pathways to sustainable project approvals.

As part of our government's commitment to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), we are revitalizing the EA process to ensure recognition of Indigenous processes, decisions, community involvement and knowledge.

...2

- 2 -

At this stage in our process of EA Revitalization we are asking for your comments on concepts that we are considering to revitalize the EA process. I am pleased to share with you a [Discussion Paper](#) that includes concepts and questions on a revitalized EA process. The Discussion Paper reflects what was heard during three engagement streams that have recently concluded: [First Nations workshops](#) conducted by the First Nations Energy and Mining Council, [the report and recommendations of the EA Advisory Committee](#) and the [direct engagements](#) conducted by the Environmental Assessment Office.

The public comment period will extend over the next six weeks, ending on July 30, 2018. I invite you to review the Discussion Paper and to share your comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Heyman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the "H" and "G" being particularly prominent.

George Heyman
Minister