

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS IN B.C.

Our Vision Excellence in Environmental Assessment

Our Mission Inspire confidence through transparent, neutral regulatory oversight that protects the environment, fosters a sound economy and advances Indigenous reconciliation

What is the Environmental Assessment Office?

The Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) is a neutral regulatory agency that manages environmental assessments of proposed major projects in B.C. – such as mines, oil and gas pipelines and facilities, large infrastructure projects and resorts. Projects that exceed the thresholds set in regulations must be reviewed to assess potential impacts on people and the environment. The EAO works with and gets input from technical experts,

First Nations, companies, the public, local governments, and federal and provincial agencies to assess projects and recommend whether or not they should be approved to proceed.

Supporting reconciliation with First Nations is also a key purpose of the EAO. The EAO collaborates with First Nations throughout the assessment process and involves First Nations in the decision-making on projects that may affect them.

What does the Environmental Assessment Office do?

Assessments follow a clearly defined process under the 2018 Environmental Assessment Act, developed with input from First Nations, stakeholders and the public. Key elements include deep participation from First Nations and early engagement before the assessment begins to identify and find ways to address issues and concerns.

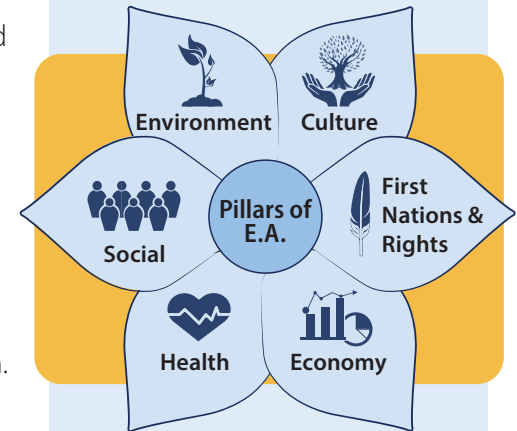
Assessments consider a range of potential impacts from a project, including direct, indirect and cumulative effects. The EAO examines how a project will affect the environment, economy, and First Nations and their rights, as well as health, social and cultural effects. The EAO must look at how some groups of people may be disproportionately affected by a project,

as well as a project's effects on current and future generations and greenhouse gas emissions.

The environmental assessment process generally takes three to five years, but varies depending on complexity and the proponent's planning and engagement. The assessment informs the decision by the B.C. Minister of Environment and a second provincial minister on whether or not to issue an environmental assessment certificate, which is required for a project to proceed.

Modern enforcement tools ensure compliance with the requirements put in place to mitigate potential negative impacts from approved projects.

PILLARS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS IN B.C.



The EAO was established in 1996. The office has reviewed more than 300 projects since, with about 130 receiving an environmental assessment certificate and approved to proceed.

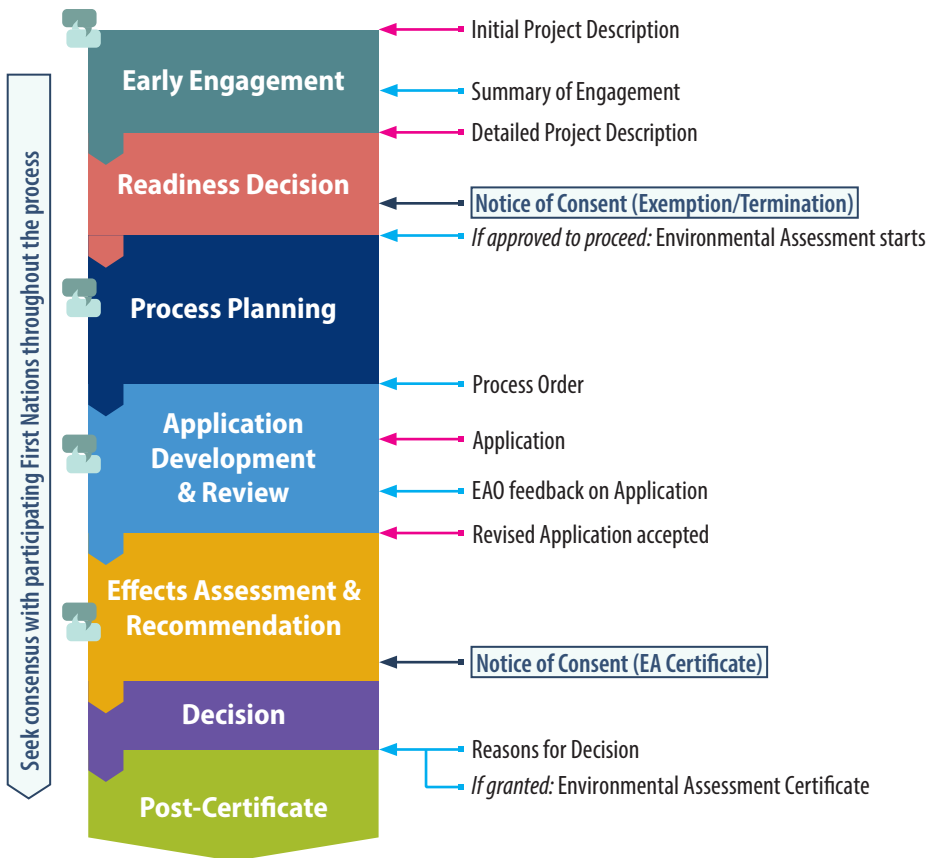
As of February 2024, about 50 projects are at various stages of the environmental assessment process.



EAO

Environmental Assessment Office

Environmental assessment process:



Legend

- Public Engagement & Comment Period
- EAO Produced
- Proponent Produced

How can you participate?

The EAO holds four public comment periods at different phases during the environmental assessment process. These may include in-person open houses or virtual information sessions to learn more about a proposed project.

Input from community members who may be affected by a proposed project improves the quality of the EAO's assessments. Local or specialized knowledge helps make sure what is important to the community is considered.

The EAO's job is to assess the potential effects of a proposed project – environmental, health, social, cultural, Indigenous rights and economic – and make sure negative impacts can be avoided or minimized if it is approved. General comments for or against a project are not helpful for understanding the potential positive and negative effects. The more detailed, specific and verifiable the input is, the more helpful it is.

Public comments are accepted through our engagement platform, EPIC.engage, or by mailed letter.

Learn more about commenting on projects in the environmental assessment process at: gov.bc.ca/EAOPublicComments.

Providing input

WHAT MAKES A COMMENT HELPFUL?

Comments that are thoughtful and articulate a specific concern or benefit give the EAO information to better assess potential impacts.

“I’ve been fishing in Dash Creek for years, and often catch Rainbow trout near the project site. I am concerned their habitat will be harmed.”

“This project will bring needed business and jobs to our town, but it will mean we no longer have access to some of the nature trails in the area. Can the company build some new trails with community input?”

“I’m concerned about how many more people will be coming into our community. I don’t think we’re set up for a large increase. It’s already hard to get in to see the doctor or find daycare.”

WHAT COMMENTS ARE NOT HELPFUL?

Comments that express a nonspecific concern don't give enough information to help the EAO properly assess and understand potential effects.

“I think the project will be bad for the fish in the area.”

“The project will ruin our way of life – it needs to be stopped.”

“The project is terrible and bad for the environment.”

“Build this project now!”

The EAO respectfully acknowledges that it carries out its work on the territories of First Nations throughout British Columbia.

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www.gov.bc.ca/eao