

Approved Policy of the Timmins Chamber of Commerce as submitted to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce

The Alignment and Responsiveness of the Environmental Assessment Process

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) holds the responsibility to review projects to ensure the continued sustainable development of Canada as per the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, enacted in 1992.

One of the purposes of the act as stated is to promote a sustainable development and thereby achieve or maintain a healthy environment and a healthy economy (section 4, sub b) and to promote cooperation and coordinated action between the federal and provincial governments with respect to environmental assessment processes for projects (section 4, sub b.2). This Act was introduced to ensure a stabilized and guided development with Canadian Industry to ensure our world-class environmental standard is maintained. In 1999-2000, more than 5674 Environmental Assessments were conducted, with 870 or 15% still outstanding after one year.

Recognizing a need for greater efficiency in the Act, Bill C-9 received Royal Assent on July 11, 2003 and came into effect in October 30, 2003. The bill created the position of the Federal Environment Assessment Advisor. A position authorized to set timelines and ensure the proponent and public are advised of the scope of the assessment. However wait times, caused by a lack of information sharing and bureaucratic red tape, for environmental assessments continues to discourage business development in many areas of Canada and the current process has cost the Canadian economy millions of dollars in lost productivity and investments. (i.e. DeBeers is experiencing an 18 month delay in assessments which may delay the Victor Mine Project in Canada's James Bay by a full year.)

In January 1998, the Canadian Council of the Ministers of the Environment, with the exception of Quebec, signed an accord designed to lead to improved cooperation across Canada. A separate Canada-Provincial/Territorial Environmental agreement exists for each province and some are only draft, as is the case in Ontario, with a variance in timeline expectations across Canada.

It is time for the Federal government to commit to the alignment and harmonization of their process with those of the provinces/territories to ensure timelines are met.

Recommendations

That the federal government:

- 1) Review the implementation of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act to ensure the efficient and transparent processing of all Federal Environmental Assessments.
- 2) Create a streamlined process to share Environmental Assessment data with the provincial/territorial governments to avoid duplication of data collection and transfer. Finalize Canada-provincial/territorial agreements with every province territory by Fall 2005. Set a target that 80% of all harmonized reviews (both provincial/territorial and federal assessment) meet the timelines as set out by the province/territory in which the project occurs.

SUBMITTED BY THE TIMMINS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE OF THE CANADIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SUPPORTS THIS RESOLUTION