



File: 30010-02/EAR GEN

Reference: 358486

July 21, 2020

SENT VIA EMAIL

Brad Sperling
Chair
Peace River Regional District
Box 810, 1981 Alaska Avenue
Dawson Creek, BC V1G 4H8
prrd.dc@prrd.bc.ca

Dear Brad Sperling:

Thank you for your letter of June 23, 2020, regarding engagement with local governments during the Environmental Assessment Revitalization process.

The Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) engaged with local governments throughout the revitalization process in a variety of ways to ensure the process was informed by feedback from those who are involved in and impacted by the Environmental Assessment Process.

Over the course of revitalizing B.C.'s Environmental Assessment process, the EAO convened committees composed of a variety of experts in environmental assessment to provide independent advice on legislation, regulations and policies.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) Advisory Committee was comprised of 10 members, one from local government and others from industry, environmental non-governmental organizations, environmental law, impact assessors and planners. The Committee met 10 times (over 75 hours) between March and April 2018 and produced a report with 33 recommendations that sought to support all parties in the EA process. Together they provided an independent analysis of B.C.'s previous environmental assessment process to inform the development of the *Environmental Assessment Act* (2018) (the Act), which came into force in December 2019.

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With regard to the regulations and policies to support the implementation of the Act, a Stakeholder Implementation Committee convened comprising of members from local government, industry, environmental non-governmental organizations, environmental law, impact assessors and planners. The committee met for 11 days between April and December of 2019 to provide feedback and advice on the development of policies and regulations in support of the new Act.

Information on the Environmental Assessment Advisory Committee and the Stakeholder Implementation Committee [can be found here](#).

The EAO also held direct engagements with the Union of B.C. Municipalities (UBCM) [reflected here](#) and included phone calls, video conference calls and in-person engagements that took place throughout 2018,.

All local governments across B.C. were invited to provide input during the public comment period on the development of the Reviewable Project Regulation (held between September 6 and October 7, 2019), One formal submission was received from a local government and is included in the Reviewable Project Regulation report [What We Heard](#).

In February 2020, we hosted two in-person workshops for over 300 participants. The invitation was extended to 700 parties, including local governments, to discuss and engage on the new Act. The day was intended to be an interactive session - an opportunity for participant engagement through case study activities and interactive question-and-answer periods. In addition, the EAO also hosted an online webinar in April 2020 extending an invitation to stakeholder groups from across the province including many local government staff. Over 580 users participated in the webinar throughout the presentation.

With regard to project specific assessments, the EAO works with local governments during the early engagement phase of the EA process; to understand how they want to be engaged; what their processes and timelines are for providing input; any suggested engagement approaches with their communities; and suggestions for local groups to engage with. We then use this information in planning next steps on how we will work with local governments and provide opportunities for representatives to participate in our [Technical Advisory Committee \(TAC\) or Community Advisory Committee \(CAC\)](#).

Moving forward we want to continue to enhance public confidence by ensuring impacted local communities and governments, Indigenous Nations and the broader public can meaningfully participate in [all stages of environmental assessment](#) through a process that is robust, transparent, timely and predictable.

I hope this information is helpful and illustrates how local governments provided input to the Environmental Assessment Revitalization process and provides information on the involvement of local governments in project specific assessments. For any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Bailey', written in a cursive style.

Scott Bailey
Acting Associate Deputy Minister and
Chief Executive Assessment Officer



PEACE RIVER REGIONAL DISTRICT

June 23, 2020

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PO Box 9426 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9V1

Sent Via Email: eaoinfo@gov.bc.ca

On behalf of the Regional Board, I would like to express disappointment in the lack of engagement with local governments during the environmental assessment revitalization process.

In a news release on March 7, 2018, the Premier stated that the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) will be leading “government to government meetings with First Nations and inviting key stakeholders, including industry, environmental non-governmental organizations, local governments, labour and others, to gather specific feedback about their views, experiences and proposed measures to revitalize the environmental assessment process”. The environmental assessment revitalization engagement process included direct engagement meetings, work shops, forums, an advisory committee and an implementation committee.

The EAO used the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) as the engagement tool for local governments. A single article was published in the Compass by UBCM in March of 2018. A direct result of the lack of engagement with local government was evident by the lack of responses submitted by local governments and elected officials. During the engaging period, the Province received over 1500 individual survey responses and approximately 30 formal submissions from organizations. Only one local government response was received.

The EAO and UBCM failed to successfully engage local governments in a meaningful way. Effective engagement should include methods that are accommodating, adaptable, and creative; not simply applying a uniform strategy to all engagement platforms. Moving forward, the Peace River Regional District requests that all local governments are meaningfully engaged and have the opportunity to participate in the process before decisions are made.

Sincerely,

Brad Sperling
Chair

diverse. vast. abundant.

PLEASE REPLY TO:

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