

Timeline: BC's Unfulfilled EA Participant Funding Promise

- **May 2018:** The independent Advisory Committee established by the BC government to guide environmental assessment ("EA") reform [recommends](#) a public participant funding program:

"For local governments or public interest groups to be satisfied that decisions made at the EA process gates represents a robust assessment that clearly addresses their interests, each will need sufficient technical and funding support... Funds should also be available through an independent source that can be seen to be objective about allocations based on an assessment of need. Funding for public participants needs to be sufficient to enable engagement from the early stages of project definition through to the management of compliance and enforcement."
- **June 2018:** The BC government's intentions paper for EA revitalization [commits](#): "A program for public participant funding is planned, with details subject to further engagement."
- **November 2018:** During debate on the Bill to enact the new *Environmental Assessment Act*, Minister George Heyman [states](#) to the Legislature: "Our intentions paper sets out that a program for public participant funding is planned, with details subject to further engagement."
- **November 27, 2018:** The new *Environmental Assessment Act* receives royal assent. The *Act* itself does not address participant funding.
- **September 2021:** The Environmental Assessment Office ("EAO") declines two requests by [What Matters in Our Valley](#) ([see response](#)) and the [Northwest Institute](#) ([see response](#)) for participant funding in the EA of the Tenas Coal Project. In its refusal, the EAO states:

"The EAO continues to advance other Environmental Assessment Revitalization objectives, including options for public participation funding... While the EAO encourages community groups and other interested parties to participate in project environmental assessments, unfortunately at this time the EAO is not able to provide any financial funding to support their participation."

Both groups instead had to privately fundraise and seek in-kind assistance from an environmental charity to prepare reports, which they [submitted](#) to the EA of the Tenas Coal Project in July 2022.
- **October 2021:** Various organizations, including those issuing today's press release, [write to Minister Heyman](#) demanding a clear timeline for establishment of a participant funding program.
- **December 2021:** In response, [Minister Heyman writes](#):

"While there is not currently a program for public participation funding, I understand that the EAO remains committed to engaging on options for public participant funding, as outlined in the Intentions Paper. Further details of future engagement will be provided when they are available."
- **September 2023:** Various organizations, including those issuing today's press release, again [write to Minister Heyman](#), noting the lack of any action to establish a participant funding program and again demanding a clear timeline for its establishment. No response has been received to date.
- **October 2023:** An environmental assessment certificate is issued for the Cariboo Gold Project, the first project to commence and complete assessment entirely under the new *Environmental Assessment Act*. A participant funding program was never made available to the community.