

Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) Three-year Preliminary Spending Plan Summary

Mission

To provide British Columbians with a focused, thorough and timely environmental assessment process, leading to balanced advice to Ministers that reflects the government's broader objectives for sustainable resource management, strong communities and economic growth while maintaining high environmental standards.

Strategic Shifts

In 2002, the Environmental Assessment Office will be undertaking a major reform of the current environmental assessment process in order to implement the following strategic shifts:

- from a prescriptive to an enabling statute that introduces broad flexibility to the process;
- from a process-based approach to one that focuses on the specific issues related to the project;
- from a standardized to a customized process, tailoring the process to the specific needs of the project and minimizing the government's administrative burden;
- from a process providing limited proponent choice to one which increases proponent options
- from uncertainty to certainty regarding the duration and scope of the review;
- from a process that can be costly to government and proponents to a streamlined and cost-effective process;
- from a process that may entail high review agency workloads to one in which those workloads are reduced;
- from a process vulnerable to overlap and duplication with the federal environmental assessment process to one based on enhanced cooperation to minimize overlap and duplication.

Core Business Areas

Major Project Environmental Assessments

The Environmental Assessment Office oversees and manages the province's major project environmental assessment process. The process identifies the potential environmental, economic and social aspects of a proposed project and determines ways to eliminate, minimize or mitigate any negative impacts.

Corporate Operations

Many of the Environmental Assessment Office's corporate operations are provided by a shared services model in conjunction with the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management. The corporate operations provided internally include strategic and service planning, budgeting, staff development, policy and legislation, communications, records management, the Project Registry and the website.

Major Initiatives

While its core business of managing major project environmental assessments will continue, the current process will be significantly reformed so that it is more timely, cost-effective, certain and accountable.

Major Initiatives in the next three years include the following:

- develop and implement the change as the environmental assessment process is reformed, including managing projects undergoing assessment through the current legislated process while developing and implementing the new process;
- promote a seamless project approval process through streamlined decision-making, including an improved alignment with permitting and licensing;
- implement regulatory reforms to remove projects from the environmental assessment process when they can be reviewed adequately under other review mechanisms;
- support the development and implementation of results-based standards and guidelines;
- re-negotiate the Canada-British Columbia Agreement for Environmental Assessment Cooperation to reduce the duplication and overlap of the two processes;
- introduce technology enhancements to achieve efficiencies through electronic documentation;
- expand the corporate services delivered under the Shared Services Model.

Resources

	Fiscal Year				Percentage Change
	(restated estimates) 2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	
Operating Expenditures	3.842	3.470	2.825	2.378	(37%)
FTEs	43	35	30	27	(37%)