

NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release
July 7, 2011**

IMPROVED OVERSIGHT NEEDED BY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OFFICE

VICTORIA – Auditor General John Doyle has released his latest report, *An Audit of the Environmental Assessment Office's Oversight of Certified Projects*.

Major projects such as mines or power plants must be considered for an environmental assessment prior to their development. This assessment weighs not only the potential environmental effects of the project, but its potential economic, social, heritage and health effects as well.

When an environmental assessment certificate is issued, the conditions and commitments surrounding its issue should be measurable and enforceable so staff can monitor the project for compliance with the certificate conditions.

"Because this does not happen consistently, the Environmental Assessment Office cannot assure British Columbians that the conditions and commitments stated in the environmental assessment certificate are being met," said Doyle. "Adequate monitoring and enforcement of certified projects is not occurring and follow-up evaluations are not being conducted. We also found that information currently being provided to the public is not sufficient to ensure accountability."

The report makes six recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the Environmental Assessment Office, which government has accepted.

"I am encouraged that, during the course of our audit, the Environmental Assessment Office addressed some of the noted deficiencies, such as appointing a Director of Strategy and Quality Assurance," said Doyle. "I look forward to receiving updates on the implementation of our recommendations through our follow-up process."

The Auditor General is a non-partisan, independent Officer of the Legislature who reports directly to the Legislative Assembly. The *Auditor General Act* empowers the Auditor General and staff (known as the Office of the Auditor General or OAG) to conduct audits, report findings and make recommendations.

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