



Province of
British Columbia
Environmental
Assessment Office

NEWS RELEASE

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ELKHORN QUARRY EXTENSION PROJECT APPROVED

VICTORIA — A project which will maintain secure, well-paid jobs by extending the life of a gypsum quarry near Invermere in southeastern B.C. is the first to be approved under the province's new *Environmental Assessment Act*, Environment, Lands and Parks Minister Moe Sihota and Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources Minister Anne Edwards announced today.

Both ministers have endorsed a project approval certificate which allows Westroc Industries Ltd. to proceed with development of the Elkhorn Quarry Extension Project, located adjacent to an existing gypsum quarry operation on Windermere Creek.

"Westroc has effectively addressed all the significant environmental questions raised by the public and First Nations," said Sihota. "The review process has demonstrated once again that mine development can take place in B.C. in an environmentally sound manner."

"This approval and approximately three years of existing reserves ensure continued year-round employment for 21 workers for at least the next 17 years," Edwards said. "Resource development which doesn't compromise the environment is part of this government's plan for B.C.'s future."

Gypsum has been mined at the Elkhorn Quarry since the early 1950s, but reserves are nearing depletion.

In May 1995, Westroc submitted an application to develop adjacent reserves known as the Elkhorn Quarry Extension. The project was being reviewed under the mine development assessment process then transferred to the environmental assessment process on June 30, when the *Environmental Assessment Act* became law.

The project committee set up to review the proposed project recommended approval of the application in August.

In its report, the committee concluded that the application had described all significant adverse potential effects along with practical means of preventing or reducing these to an acceptable level.

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In particular, the committee noted that:

- impacts on both water quality and downstream domestic water supplies are not a concern because Westroc's current operations have not posed problems in the past and a water management plan for the extension is considered adequate to prevent potential adverse effects downstream;
- the mine plan is geotechnically sound and is not expected to lead to adverse impacts with respect to worker health and safety and the environment;
- reclamation (or restoration of the site after mining has concluded) of the proposed extension can readily be incorporated into the progressive ongoing reclamation plan for the overall quarry operation.

The gypsum mined at the site is used primarily in the production of wallboard and, to a lesser extent, for cement production and agricultural use. After primary processing on site, crushed gypsum is shipped to manufacturing plants in Vancouver, Alberta and Washington state.

"Westroc's existing operation pumps an estimated \$3 million into the local economy annually through direct wages and the purchase of material and services," said Columbia River-Revelstoke MLA Jim Doyle. "Today's announcement is welcome news for the company, its workers and their families, and communities in the area."

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