

Oct 8, 96

## BRIEFING NOTE FOR THE MINISTER

**ISSUE:** Voisey's Bay - Voisey's Bay Nickel Company (VBN) has filed its project proposal with DFO.

### BACKGROUND:

- On September 27, 1996 the Voisey's Bay Nickel Company Limited hand delivered its Voisey's Bay Mine/Mill Project Description to DFO in Ottawa under a covering letter to the Deputy Minister.
- VBN is providing information copies to Natural Resources Canada and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency as well.
- DFO is reviewing the project description to officially confirm what regulatory action the department must take pursuant to the Fisheries Act and the Navigable Waters Protection Act (NWPA), and whether a review pursuant to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA) is required. The proponent has indicated that it expects the project will require regulatory decisions pursuant to the Fisheries Act (i.e. Section 35(2) authorizations) which will trigger a CEAA review. The proponent has also indicated that it expects that a public panel review under CEAA will be required.
- Initial scanning of the Project Description indicates that the proponent is proposing to destroy fish habitat in lakes containing lake trout and possibly other species in the course of disposing of its tailings and waste rock. Under the Fisheries Act, VBN would require a Section 35(2) authorization to use the lakes in this manner.
- VBN has provided a copy of the project description to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador but has not officially registered the project in the provincial environmental assessment process.
- VBN issued a Press Release late on September 27 indicating that its Mine/Mill Development proposal has been filed with DFO for review and transmission to the Minister of the Environment for a public panel review.

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**CURRENT STATUS:**

- The DFO Press Line outlined below has been developed in concert with other federal departments. DFO will take the federal lead in responding to inquiries. Scott Parsons, ADM Science, is the departmental spokesperson.
- Plans are being made to verbally brief Economic Development Policy Committee next Thursday, October 10. Minister McLellan will take the lead; however, you will also have an opportunity to provide an update on the status of the DFO analysis. Speaking points are attached.
- Questions and Answers are being developed in concert with other federal departments.

**PRESS LINE:**

**The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) has received a copy of the Voisey's Bay Mine/Mill Project Description from Voisey's Bay Nickel Company Limited. The company has asked DFO to consider the document with respect to the department's mandate to protect fish and fish habitat as well as navigation.**

**We are now reviewing the proposal with a view to preparing the necessary documentation to refer it to the Minister of the Environment for a public panel review pursuant the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.**

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