



NEWS RELEASE

B.C. Government Bows to Narrow Special interests and Creates a De Facto Park in the Flathead Valley

Vancouver, B.C. – February 10, 2010 – In response to yesterday's Throne Speech, the Association for Mineral Exploration British Columbia (AME BC) calls upon the Government of British Columbia to respect existing land use plans and keep the Flathead Valley open to responsible mineral explorers.

“Unfortunately, the Government of B.C. has decided to restrict access to mineral explorers and hindered our sector by banning mining and effectively creating a de facto park in the Flathead Valley without any real due process, public debate or sound science,” stated AME BC's President & CEO, Gavin C. Dirom. “Despite the fact that over 1,200 mineral exploration and mining companies are based in B.C.; despite the hundreds of millions of dollars spent on mineral exploration in the province; and despite the fact that no new major metal mines have been opened in B.C. since 1998, government continues to minimize the public's mineral land base and harm the sector's international reputation and ability to work at home. This is all on the basis of political demands from certain American interests primarily from the State of Montana.”

Although not widely appreciated or understood, mineral exploration is a low-impact activity. Actual mining takes place on less than one percent of the B.C. land base while providing the most financial return per hectare, by far, of any economic activity in the province.

“The decision to ban mining in the Flathead completely shows a lack of respect for our permitting, environmental assessment, and land use planning processes in British Columbia and Canada. The Flathead is within a region that already has an existing land use plan, created with extensive local input, that protects more than 16% of the region's land base,” argued Dirom.

AME BC recently conducted a public opinion poll in the Kootenay East provincial electoral district and found that the public is evenly divided on restricting access to the Flathead for mineral exploration and mining interests. The poll also indicated that small scale, underground metal mining would be acceptable to most residents.

“Government has used a blunt instrument to address a specific challenge,” added Dirom. “B.C.'s world-class environmental assessment process exists to determine whether mineral development can proceed with minimal impact and maximum benefit, a reasonable process both we and the public are now being denied.”

Combined with restrictions on uranium and thorium exploration, arbitrary wildlife regulations, and uncertainty regarding First Nations, this announcement further undermines the sector. AME BC has requested government to provide British Columbians with an accurate accounting of the total area of public mineral lands now restricted from mineral exploration and development.

“This government has allowed certain special interests to trump effective, science-based planning that considers whether responsible mineral exploration and development can take place in B.C.,” stated Dirom. “Most importantly, the citizens of B.C. have now lost even more of their mineral land base and future economic opportunities. As such, this is a sad day for those that believe in due process, high standards, and the ability of responsible mineral explorers and prospectors to share the land and play a major role in B.C. and Canada's much needed economic recovery,” concluded Dirom.

About AME BC:

AME BC is the predominant voice of mineral exploration in British Columbia. Established in 1912, AME BC represents over 4,300 members including geoscientists, prospectors, engineers, entrepreneurs, exploration companies, suppliers, mineral producers, and associations who are engaged in mineral exploration in BC and throughout the world. Through leadership, advocacy, and partnerships, AME BC promotes a healthy environment and business climate for the mineral exploration industry.

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For further information, please contact Byng Giraud, Vice President, Corporate Affairs, AME BC at 778.233.6449 or byng@amebc.ca.